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What Was So 'Good' About WW II? *Henry Fairlie*

CONSERVATIVES AND APARTHEID • THE DEATH PENALTY PRO & CON • WIESELTIER ON HAROLD BRODKEY

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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THE SURVIVOR
Everyone feared him, especially his friends.

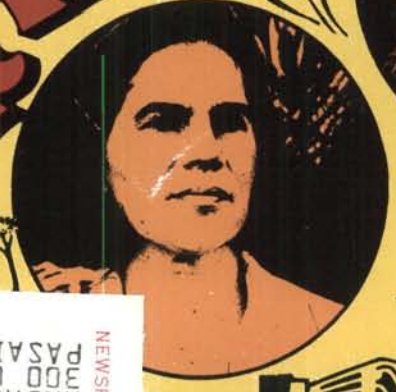
THE PRESIDENT
The bookish guerrilla who was no one's first choice.

THE BISHOP
God was on his side–but that was not enough.

the SAGA of the SANDINISTAS

BY GABRIEL ZAID

THE RENEGADE
He was too popular for his own good.



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CORRESPONDENCE

IMMIGRATION IMBROGLIO

To the editors:

Chuck Lane's largely moral argument for an open-door immigration policy ("Open the Door," April 1) was refreshing in this time of short-order pragmatism. However, Mr. Lane overlooked one dimension—that is, the way our government promotes the impoverishment of nations now exporting their labor to the United States. In Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, and Mexico, economic opportunities are limited to a corrupt clique that squanders national wealth on its luxuries. The clique keeps the cost of labor lower than the actual cost of maintaining a subhuman standard of living. These countries are dumping their artificially low-priced labor onto us without having invested in that labor. In time, this will further cut wages and contribute to the erosion of the American middle class. We could become more like the countries to our south instead of the reverse.

For humanitarian as well as pragmatic reasons, we should go to the source of our immigration pressures and press for real democratic reforms.

TONY MOSS
Middleton, Wisconsin

To the editors:

Surely there is a prize for the most ignorant, slipshod, superficial essay of the year. Award the prize at once to Chuck Lane's appalling piece on immigration. Every part of his argument is in error, the conclusion the sum of them all. He is wrong on the impacts of current levels of immigration, thinking them positive when most are negative—job displacement and lowered standards for lower-tier (especially black and Hispanic) Americans, population growth with attendant resource drains and environmental damage, creation of a growing underclass, and much else. Luckily, Lane knows nothing of demographic projections for the Third World, or he would surely have noticed the population pressures and bleak economic prospects in societies now sending surplus populations to the U.S. in larger legal and illegal numbers than ever before.

Most painful to a historian is his misuse of history. History does not "prove" anything, and it surely does not "prove" that, since the immigrants who came to the U.S. in the early 1900s appear to have benefited the society, large-scale immigration will always have the same impacts in the future. That was a very long time ago, as to American carrying capacity, labor force needs, and global population prospects.

OTIS L. GRAHAM
Professor of History
University of North Carolina

MORE ON MURRAY

To the editors:

I agree with Robert Greenstein ("Losing Faith in *Losing Ground*," March 25) that Charles Murray's argument rests upon improper comparisons and spurious analyses, plus a complete disregard of evidence contrary to his thesis.

Mr. Murray's main argument for education is that the education of poor blacks has suffered substantially because of the Great Society programs. As his primary evidence he offers a comparison of black and white test scores from three different studies and purports to show that the black-white achievement gap has widened considerably since 1965. In fact, the data from these three studies are not really comparable. They are based upon different tests and different populations, even different age groups.

To compound the error Mr. Murray uses the wrong statistic to make the comparisons. When one computes the correct statistic, the widening gap between black and white test scores is shown not to be widening at all, even using the three studies Mr. Murray has improperly compared.

Furthermore, he has totally ignored prominent data contrary to his thesis. The most obvious source of data on black and white achievement-test differences is the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which the federal government has funded for two decades. In 1982 the *Educational Researcher* summarized these findings to say that "typically when achievement for white students has declined, that for black

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TRUST A POET TO KNOW IT.

Ogden Nash once wrote:
There is something about a martini,
Ere the dining and dancing begin,
And to tell you the truth,
It is not the vermouth—
I think that perhaps it's the gin.

Mr. Nash, we suspect, had Beefeater Gin in mind when he penned that little verse.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,670

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TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

FICA Follies

Democrats looking for an issue are determined to make a fuss over Social Security. That's a good idea, but they've approached it with their characteristic lack of vision. The scandal isn't President Reagan's trivial proposed cut in Social Security benefits. It's the enormous increase during his tenure in the Social Security *tax*. This tax has become an unfair, job-destroying, resentment-stirring monster, just waiting for a liberal St. George to rise up and slay it.

St. George won't be Senator Pat Moynihan. Moynihan has been reminding people of how Reagan promised last fall that he would never, never, never cut Social Security. "Social Security has nothing to do with the deficit," Reagan argued then, because it is paid for by a separate tax that goes into a separate trust fund. Moynihan wants to hold Reagan to this. "The Social Security program is *not* contributing to the federal deficit," and any benefit cuts "by law . . . could not be used to pay for non-Social Security spending."

Like so much else about Social Security, this is a polite fiction. The Social Security trust fund is a government nest egg invested in government bonds. Dollars that flow into and out of it affect the government's need to borrow money from the outside world—that is, the deficit—exactly like dollars the government receives and spends in any other way.

Moynihan is quite right that Social Security isn't "contributing to" the deficit these days. In fact, by 1990 Social Security will be bringing in $50 billion a year more than it will be paying out. Despite Reagan's insistence that the Social Security trust fund is a thing apart, his budget office cheerily subtracts these handsome surpluses in calculating the federal deficit, which otherwise would be even larger than it is. But Moynihan draws the wrong lesson from all this. The moral isn't that Social Security benefits shouldn't be cut. It's that Social Security taxes are way too high.

For all the chatter about tax cuts, the Reagan years have brought a tax increase for many people, especially the working poor. Already in 1979, over half of all covered workers paid more in Social Security—"FICA" on your paycheck stub—than they did in ordinary income tax. Since then, while income taxes have been cut, there has been a 15 percent increase in the Social Security tax, which now takes a total of more than 14 cents from employer and employee for every dollar of wages. As a result, in 1984, a two-worker family of four paid more FICA tax than income tax up to an income of $33,500. FICA brings the government four times as much revenue as the corporate income tax, and four-fifths as much as Form 1040 itself. And the FICA tax is scheduled to increase another nine percent by 1990.

From a progressive point of view, it would be hard to design a worse way to raise revenue. We don't burden people with the income tax until they've climbed at least partway out of poverty, but we hit them with FICA the minute they earn their first dollar. The FICA tax rate doesn't increase with income. Instead, once someone has crossed a magic threshold (currently about $40,000), we exempt all further earnings from the tax. And the tax applies only to wages. Interest, dividends, capital gains—the income sources of rich people—are completely exempt.

As seen from the "supply side," the Social Security tax is equally puzzling. It is puzzling, at least, if your concern is creating jobs. FICA is essentially a 14 percent penalty on the joint decision of an employer to hire someone and of an unemployed person to go to work. As with poor people, we don't attempt to collect any income tax from money-losing companies, including new companies, which almost always lose money at first. But FICA is due the minute you open up shop and someone joins your payroll. Thus the burden falls most heavily on the shakiest enterprises and the most vulnerable employees.

Even while this regressive tax on human employment has been growing, President Reagan and Congress have engineered an enormous reduction in the tax on financial investment. Since 1978 the capital gains tax, the corporate income tax, the higher brackets of the individual income tax, and the estate tax all have been dramatically lowered. In effect, we have been conducting a grand experiment in transferring the burden of taxation from capital to labor. We have been penalizing workers and subsidizing machines. Especially with the 1981 accelerated depreciation rules for plant and equipment, we have been bribing companies to replace labor with capital wherever possible. It is Luddism in reverse, and just as stupid.

Although the Social Security system brings in more money each year than it pays out, this does not mean that the typical beneficiary has paid in more than he or she gets out. Quite the contrary. The Congressional Research Service has calculated that, for the average person retiring in 1960, a lifetime of employer and employee payments—even with compound interest—covered only one-seventh of the benefits he or she received. For the 1980 retiree, the figure is 40 percent. For someone joining the work force today, however, it's a different picture. Because of the current high tax rates—needed to pay the current high benefits—he or she will get back less than a dollar in value for every dollar put into the system. Social Security, in short, is not an insurance system. It's a redistribution plan.

There's nothing wrong with redistribution, in my book, as long as it goes from rich to poor. On average, though, the elderly are now better off than the people who are paying the FICA tax. Only 1.5 percent better off before taxes in 1982, but a whopping 13 percent better off after taxes. That's because, among other reasons, Social Security benefits are mostly tax-free. FICA payments, by contrast, are subject to income tax as well.

During the 1984 presidential campaign, Reagan occasionally contrasted his own tax cuts with the FICA tax increases approved under that two-headed beast known as "Carter-Mondale." In fact, though, Reagan was as free to propose rolling back these tax hikes scheduled for his watch as he was to cut other taxes already in place. Instead, he has gratefully, if quietly, accepted this new flood of revenue and used it to help finance tax cuts for the better-off. Where is the Democrat with the wit to demand that President Reagan get the government off the backs of working people?

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MAY 20, 1985

THE KINDEST CUTS

During his campaign against Walter Mondale, President Reagan chose to treat the $200 billion budget deficit as a mere annoyance, a hobgoblin that his reelection and economic growth would chase away in a jiffy. But in his televised address on April 24, Reagan sounded like a born-again gloom-and-doomer. "All our dreams for the future could be wrecked," he said, "if we do not overcome one giant obstacle." Later he told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that "in a fundamental sense, what is at stake is nothing less than our democracy itself."

Reagan's plan to rescue democracy, which was worked out as a compromise with Senate Republican leaders, and which was given tentative approval by a 50-49 Senate vote last Tuesday, would cut $52 billion out of next year's budget, with the goal of reducing the deficit to $98 billion (two percent of GNP) by 1988. Reagan claims that the plan will not only "stop the worst abuses of overspending" but that it is "fair" and "balanced" as well. "It will protect the neediest among us," he said.

There is much justice in Reagan's first assertion. Most of the programs he proposes to eliminate are indeed abuses of the federal purse. The Reagan budget would eliminate the one billion dollar annual postal subsidy to magazines (ouch!) and junk mailers, and imposes $1.9 billion worth of users' fees, including a $150 million fee for the yachtsmen who benefit from the Coast Guard's services.

Overall, the plan would eliminate 17 federal programs. Some of these are dear to liberal hearts, but don't deserve to be. They no longer serve the progressive goals of economic development and redistribution for which they were established. Instead, they merely promote inefficiency and provide subsidies to a lucky few. Abolishing the Small Business Administration would save $1.4 billion next year. According to the Office of Management and Budget, the program benefits only one percent of small businesses—that is, the one percent that has mastered the art of lobbying for loans in Washington. Its two biggest categories of recipients are bars, restaurants and hotels, and doctors and lawyers.

Urban Development Action Grants were intended to rescue blighted inner cities. But the program's main effects have been to subsidize hotels and shopping centers, and to encourage pointless competition among the states. There is no evidence that the UDAG program is responsible for much development that wouldn't have occurred somewhere anyway. Eliminating it would save $440 million next year. The Rural Electrification Administration was set up during the New Deal to bring light to the prairie, but that goal has long since been accomplished. Now REA loans subsidize rural electric rates, which are 12 percent lower than those of non-REA utilities. This is a moment of truth for Democrats, and for many Republicans, too, who have preached the virtues of the free market, yet defended these subsidies because they benefit their constituents.

Still, cuts in domestic programs other than non-means tested entitlement programs like farm subsidies, Social Security, and Medicare only amount to $18.5 billion of the $52 billion total. At the heart of the Republican proposal are cuts in the two biggest items in the budget, Social Security and defense. The plan would trim almost three billion dollars this year from Social Security through a complicated formula that, in essence, would hold cost-of-living increases to two percent. And $18.5 billion of the plan's savings will come from scaling back the Pentagon from a six percent increase to a three percent increase after inflation.

We don't object to cutting Social Security, but there are better ways to do it than this. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the three-year cap on COLAs, coupled with the Republican plan's proposed increase in Medicare premiums, would cost the average recipient almost $1,700 over the next five years and $400 a year when fully phased in. For the 45 percent of Social Security recipients who make only twice the poverty line ($10,000 for individuals) or less, this hurts. As we pointed out in last week's Notebook, the fairest way to get a contribution to the deficit problem out of the Social Security

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program would be to make more of Social Security benefits subject to the income tax. The Congressional Budget Office recently estimated that taxing 85 percent of the benefits of those making more than $20,000 a year would save $28.4 billion by 1990, without touching any elderly individual who makes $15,000 or less.

The important thing to note about the Republican defense spending "cut" is that it actually grants the Pentagon an increase of $14 billion in real terms. When "cuts" in other government activities are being discussed, the starting point is generally their current cost, measured in actual dollars. Only in the case of the Pentagon do we adopt the convention of factoring in inflation, adding in every item on the bureaucrats' wish list, and then talk of "cutting" from there. Many senators favor a one-year "freeze" in the real growth of the defense budget—that is, an increase no greater than inflation. Budget "freezes" are a gimmick. They simply sidestep the important questions of whether or not a particular expenditure makes sense. Nevertheless, this approach may be the only way to force the Pentagon to order its priorities. There is more than enough money in the current defense budget, if spent wisely, to do the job of defending the country.

WHAT SHOULD be the Democrats' response to the Republican plan? Predictably, most are demagogically harping on the fact that Reagan has violated his campaign pledge to leave Social Security untouched. A somewhat more responsible approach is that of Senator Lawton Chiles, the ranking minority member of the Budget Committee. He would freeze defense spending for a year, and substitute a one-year COLA freeze for the Republicans' two percent cap. Beyond this, Chiles only proposes to trim the boondoggles that the administration would eliminate altogether. His idea, apparently, is to save all these programs, including clunkers like Amtrak, for some rosy future when their funding can increase again.

Chiles's plan makes the Social Security COLA freeze contingent on Congress's coming up with $68 billion in new revenues over the next five years, to be gotten through a corporate minimum tax and a freeze on credits and deductions—"tax expenditures"—that benefit the wealthy. Whether intentionally or not, this proposal can only deflect energy from the much more urgent business of enacting the Treasury's comprehensive tax reform plan. By making the economy more efficient and making tax shelters uneconomical, reform itself will bring in new tax revenues. And by widening the tax base, reducing marginal rates, and restoring people's faith in the fairness of the tax system, comprehensive reform will pave the way for necessary tax increases in the future.

In the shorter term, Congress should look to excise taxes as a way to raise new revenue. The cigarette tax, for example, is scheduled to fall from 16 cents per pack to eight cents on October 1. According to CBO, keeping the tax at its current level would raise $1.5 billion in fiscal 1986. A gasoline tax of just 12 cents a gallon would raise $7.4 billion a year, and help finish off OPEC by holding down consumption as oil prices fall.

Why are Democrats like Chiles attempting to nickel and dime their way to a deficit-reduction alternative, when, with just a bit more political courage, they could have it all? A package composed of these elements—elimination of unnecessary subsidies; increased excise taxes; taxing a greater share of Social Security; and a one-year pause in the defense buildup—would be fairer and more effective than anything either party has on the table now.

DE GUSTIBUS NON DISPUTANDUM EST

THE NEW REPUBLIC attempts to speak with authority on most important issues of the day, however great the uncertainty and conflict within our own offices. Sometimes, though, a matter of public concern arises of such enormous weight and consequence that we feel it would be unfair to our readers to paper over internal differences in the name of a specious certitude. So it is with the Coca-Cola Company's momentous decision to change, after 99 years, the secret formula for its life-enhancing beverage. Coke officials have described the new taste as "smoother, rounder, yet bolder." Others have described it, more prosaically, as "sweeter and less fizzy." Officials at Pepsi have described it as "more like Pepsi" and given all their employees a day off to celebrate "victory." What does the new Coke really taste like? Is it better than the old Coke? How does it compare to Pepsi?

As with all issues of foreign and domestic policy, the editors of TNR approached these questions in an open-minded spirit of scientific inquiry. Rejecting the easy answers of both right and left, seeking enlightenment in practical experience rather than in stale formulations and the received wisdom of so-called Washington "insiders," we organized a blind tasting. Using a random cross section, we gave each of 17 TNR staff members three plastic cups of bubbly brown liquid. The cups were labeled only A, B, and C. One contained Pepsi purchased at a nearby drugstore, one contained "old Coke" from the office vending machine, and one contained "new Coke," acquired courtesy of the Coca-Cola Company's Washington office. (To forestall any imputations of bias, a $1.89 contribution will be made to a suitable Atlanta charity.)

If history teaches us anything, it is that there are no easy answers. Of the 17 tasters, ten preferred the new Coke to the old Coke. But eight of the 17 preferred Pepsi to either one, and five of the remaining nine preferred the old Coke to the new. Comments on the new Coke ranged from "pungent yet smooth" and "nice syrupy tongue" to "flat and oversweet" and "not cold enough."

Yes, but what does it all mean? This is the question that invariably arises toward the end of any NEW REPUBLIC editorial, and the present one is no exception. The answer, of course, is that only time will tell. Cheers.

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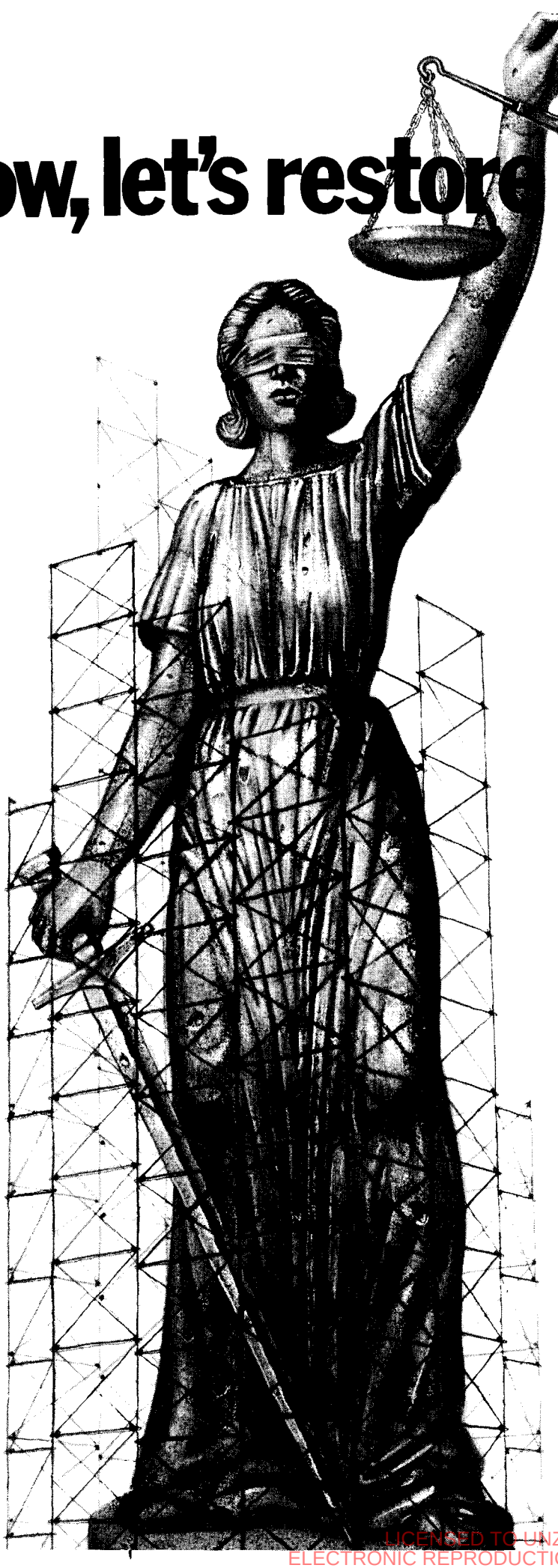
Now, let's restore Civil Justice.



Year after year, our civil justice system has become slower. More costly. Less fair to the very people it was meant to help.

We all pay the price. Some of us pay in the frustration of waiting for a case to end, or by seeing a settlement eaten away by legal costs. All of us pay in the form of higher taxes and insurance premiums.

Experts agree on the urgent need for civil justice repair. Chief Justice Burger has criticized "the high cost of legal services and the slow pace of justice." Derek Bok, president of Harvard and former dean of Harvard Law, has called our legal system "the most expensive in the world."

A 1984 Rand Corporation study of thousands of asbestos-related lawsuits shows how serious the crisis has become. Cases closed took an average two years and eight months, with 11 percent taking six years. How much money went to asbestos victims? Only 37 percent of the expenses and compensation paid by defendants and insurers. The other 63 percent went to pay litigation costs.

Can anything be done? We think it can.

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Our latest report, *The Civil Justice Crisis,* examines the reforms now being proposed. It tells how you can get involved. We'd like you to have a copy, free of charge.

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NOTEBOOK

□ THE BIGGEST EMBARRASSMENT in the United States Code is the McCarran Act, the McCarthy-era law forbidding entry into the United States for people with undesirable political views. Enforced capriciously by the State Department and the Immigration Service, it made headlines again last month when Farley Mowatt, a harmless Canadian environmentalist, was prevented from getting on a plane from Toronto to California. He may have been on the list because he joined the Fair Play for Cuba Committee 25 years ago, or it may be the result of a publicized joke he once made about stealing an atomic bomb with a 19th-century muzzle-loading rifle. No one knows how these ridiculous lists are compiled. Representative Barney Frank's bill to repeal this absurdity deserves support. What possible harm can come to the United States by letting foreigners express any views they wish to on our soil? By contrast, what harm do we do to our reputation as a bastion of free speech when we bar unpopular views at the border?

□ PROTESTING TYRANNY often requires courage. It doesn't require wit, but sometimes wit triumphs too. In Poland peaceful political marchers frequently confront the Zomos, the government policemen who are assigned to control demonstrations. Rather than retreating or hurling rocks, the Poles derisively fling their pocket change at the helmeted officers. The rain of coins tells the policemen they have sold out cheap. In Chile, the opposition to dictator Augusto Pinochet has figured out a way to let everyone register discontent without leaving his or her front steps. At an appointed time, vast numbers of Santiagans emerge from their homes and pound on their pots and pans for five minutes. And now Robert Kaplan, a writer who often contributes to TNR, tells us that after the recent coup in the Sudan, joyous crowds cut out the likeness of deposed dictator Muhammad Gaafur al-Nimeiry that appears on the country's paper currency and plastered the defaced bills to their foreheads. One band of celebrants also grabbed a stray donkey and hoisted the unfortunate beast in the air, chanting, "Buesina, Buesina"—the name of Nimeiry's wife.

□ SELECTIVE PUNISHMENT: It's O.K. not to register for the draft, as long as you don't make a fuss about it. That is the consequence of a recent Supreme Court decision upholding the government's policy of "passive enforcement" of the registration law. The government doesn't track down draft evaders. Instead, it prosecutes only those who identify themselves by protesting. In effect, true evaders and scofflaws go free while those who are making a stand on principle are punished. This policy is especially foolish since all the government wants now is your name and address on a postcard, not your body. A better approach, in our view, would be to make two kinds of postcards available at every post office. One would say: "I hereby register for the draft. [Name, address, phone number.]" The other would say: "I hereby refuse to register for the draft. [Name, address, phone number.]" Principled dissenters could make their statement, the government could compile its list of 18-year-olds, and enforcement questions could be put off until it really matters (when, depending on the circumstances, many might change their minds). Meanwhile, enforcement should concentrate on those who are shirking this minimal obligation, not those who are protesting it.

ON THE HILL

REALIGNERS COP OUT

WHEN 35 young Republican representatives wrote to the South African ambassador in Washington last December, their message argued as persuasively for a new kind of conservatism as it did against apartheid. By ending conservative silence about South Africa's official racism, they hoped to convince skeptical liberals and moderates that their vision of an "opportunity society" was more than just a repackaging of the usual right-wing themes. The letter was signed by leading young Republicans such as Newt Gingrich, Vin Weber, and Robert Walker. "We were disturbed to see conservatives all lumped into one group, who are supposedly at least acquiescing, if not pro-apartheid," says Walker, who led the effort. "We decided to define that there is at least a group of us who are vehemently anti-apartheid, too." But the realigners failed to foresee opposition from within conservative ranks, perhaps because they failed to see the contradictions in their new position. In the months since the letter was released, often vicious criticism from traditional right-wingers has forced the young turks to retreat.

The young conservatives claim to have been surprised by the vehemence of the reaction to their letter. They should have known better. Criticism of a pro-Western, anti-communist regime ran against decades of conservative theory and practice. South Africa in particular is viewed by conservatives as a crucial strategic ally, both because of its vast array of natural resources and because it serves as a bulwark against communism on the African continent. But the young turks had been unequivocal in their criticism. "If 'constructive engagement' becomes in your view an excuse for maintaining the unacceptable status quo," the letter warned the South Africans, "it will quickly become an approach that can engender no meaningful support among American policy makers." They added a blunt threat. "We are looking for an immediate end to the violence in South Africa accompanied by a demonstrated sense of urgency about ending apartheid.

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If such actions are not forthcoming, we are prepared to recommend . . . curtailing new American investment in South Africa . . . and organizing international diplomatic and economic sanctions."

The backlash began almost immediately. The magazines of the old right reiterated the traditional conservative position that criticism of South Africa, no matter what the intention, abets communism. *Human Events* ran a withering denunciation of the signers of the letter in an article on page one. "In our view, their moral authority was not enhanced by joining hands with the lynch mobs of the left. . . . Should the conservative Republicans continue their harsh, unrealistic, unforgiving line of attack, they will not be advancing the cause of liberty, but the cause of the enemies of the West." *National Review* simply dismissed the letter as "uppity."

Old-fashioned bigotry played a role too. Aides to several of the co-signers said that their bosses have received an unusual amount of negative mail. "A lot of it was racist," one aide told me, "but unfortunately these people are our constituents."

The young turks had not thought through their position either theoretically or politically. If it was imperative for conservatives to denounce the sorry human rights record of a pro-Western regime like South Africa, why wouldn't it be imperative to criticize other such regimes like Guatemala or the Philippines? That clearly would be more of a break with traditional conservatism than the young turks wanted. The realigners also neglected to calculate whether the liberal and moderate votes they might gain would outweigh the antiblack conservative votes they might lose. The racist vote may be more important to Republican politicians than many care to admit.

BY EARLY JANUARY, the retreat started. In an interview with *The Washington Times*, Walker tried to dissociate the group of 35 from liberal opponents of apartheid. "I've been somewhat shocked since the whole thing came up to read conservative publications who are accusing us of sharing the agenda of the left on South Africa. That's ridiculous." Walker also attempted to soften the letter's threat to "curtail new investment." He explained that would mean that "in the case of all new investment in South Africa, we should make the Sullivan Principles mandatory." The Sullivan Principles are a set of fair labor practice guidelines adhered to by approximately 150 of the 300 American firms doing business in South Africa.

Then in March, Walker, Gingrich, and Weber declined to support legislation proposed by liberal representatives Stephen Solarz and William Gray that would impose sanctions on South Africa—exactly the kind of bill they initially seemed to have in mind. Some of the young Republicans have opposed the bill, saying that it calls for disinvestment. But the Solarz-Gray legislation is aimed specifically at the South African government, not at private industry, and it says nothing about disinvestment. In any case, it was the young turks who said if violence did not end immediately they would look for ways to start "curtailing investment." Since December more than 100 blacks have been killed by South African police. An autopsy report on the shooting of 20 black demonstrators near the town of Uitenhage on March 21 revealed that 17 of them were shot in the back.

As an alternative to Solarz-Gray, Gingrich, Weber, and Walker introduced their own bill, which they grandiloquently call the "International Human Dignity and Opportunity Act of 1985." The bill is really aimed at Communist countries, not at South Africa. Among other things, it would ban IMF loans to nations that "cooperate" in international terrorism or illegal drug trafficking, and deny most-favored-nation trade status to countries that limit emigration or restrict the press. Amid this sea of provisions is a solitary and mild anti-apartheid measure—mandatory Sullivan Principles. Most of the signers of the December letter now say they will support the "Human Dignity" bill.

Walker explains his change of heart by arguing that this country needs an evenhanded approach to human rights problems. "It is inconceivable that the United States simply address human rights abuses which are currently gaining media attention without simultaneously addressing human rights situations everywhere in the world." Yet consider the economic sanctions already imposed by the United States. Congress has placed restrictions on trade against 20 countries, most of them Communist. Virtually no Communist countries receive U.S. foreign aid, and few may purchase high-technology products made in the United States. Many of these same nations have been the targets of periodic trade embargoes. South Africa has been singled out, but only in the sense that it is one of the only American allies not penalized by Congress for its human rights abuses.

In his pitch to fellow Republicans for the "Human Dignity" bill, Walker completed the surrender of the group of 35. He circulated a "Dear Republican Colleague" letter, which warns that "once again House Republicans are in danger of being overwhelmed by an issue, caught as we too often are without any kind of constructive alternative with which to oppose, in this case, attempts to punish South Africa." In December, of course, that is precisely what the 35 claimed they were ready to do. The "Dear Colleague" letter makes it clear that Republicans now want to keep a safe distance between themselves and the liberals on South Africa. As the vote on the Solarz-Gray bill approaches, Walker and Weber have hinted that they may take yet another approach and support an administration bill that would impose sanctions if "significant progress" in dismantling apartheid has not been made by 1987. The spirit of the December letter has long since evaporated.

By reverting to the traditional Republican line on South Africa, the would-be realigners have settled for politics as usual. Putting Pretoria on notice was an impressive-sounding gesture. Voting against the Solarz-Gray bill will confirm that it was only a ploy.

ANTONY J. BLINKEN

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Why they are who they are.

THE SANDINISTA PATH

BY GABRIEL ZAID

THE NATIONAL uprising against Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua in July 1979 resulted from the joining together of three military factions in the Sandinista National Liberation Front with the country's labor unions, students, professors, clergy, land owners, newspapermen, political parties; and from intervention by President Carter's mediators, Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, and Mexico. Nevertheless, the revolutionary consensus against Somoza was essentially negative, a consensus not committed to a particular new form of social contract, and not inspired by a revolutionary current or by a single leader. Once the dictator had been overthrown, the victors disagreed about how to distribute the rewards of victory. Whose triumph was it? What direction should the new government take?

This is why the Sandinstas did not, upon taking power, call elections to form a constituent assembly, elect a provisional government, and thus legitimize the new regime. If, upon Somoza's downfall, the nine *comandantes* sitting on the Sandinista directorate had been able to agree upon one figure who would come forward as the Sandinista presidential candidate, that candidate (and the Sandinistas) would have won in a landslide. But the Sandinistas feared that any new president would acquire a power base that the rest of the leadership would not have. They feared any such candidate might begin to fight his fellow leaders at the top with the support of the voters from below. To allow one member of the leadership to appeal to the consensus from below would be to free him in part from the consensus from above. In short, whoever won the popular vote would have independence from his comrades in the highest ranks.

Theoretically, it would have been possible for members of the Sandinista directorate to compete peacefully for power. All could have come forward as candidates and submitted themselves to a popular vote. But that wouldn't have suited those who were more adept at manipulating the consensus at the top, or more skilled at winning respect with weapons. Anyone who stood to lose from an electoral contest could point out that this kind of public campaign might degenerate into a civil war, that the winner of any such campaign would display his companions' heads as traitors to Sandinism, as counterrevolutionaries who had pretended to be revolutionaries, as anti-patriots, as scoundrels. In this view, it would be far better, whatever their differences, to appoint themselves as chief electors and decide among themselves. Better to have private haggling than public campaigning.

The result of this course was confrontation with the United States. Such confrontation is a losing proposition, as is well known to all the countries that have had to learn how to defend themselves from the North Americans. But it is a losing proposition in which two of the *comandantes*, Humberto Ortega and Tomás Borge, the Sandinista ministers of defense and interior respectively, stand to gain. Officials in the agricultural, industrial, and financial areas also stand to gain from the tension with the United States. Confrontation with the private sector causes the flight of capital and a decrease in production, but at the same time it increases the power and prominence of many other functionaries. Confrontation with the church is dangerous, surely; but even it has rewards—it ensures that the highest priests themselves determine whether they work for the bishops or for "the people"—that is to say, for the *comandantes*.

But it is not only a question of the self-interest of Sandinista officials. There is also the allure of ideology. When at last Somoza was gone and all appeared possible, who could resist the temptation to fix everything at once? Moreover, for some ideologies, living dangerously is a good thing. Out of its troubles, it is said a new, superior man, heroic and disciplined, will arise. "We will create a society where all those elements of revolutionary [science] will mediate in the unfolding of the vision which we have, . . . a superior society," Tomás Borge said in 1984.

For these ideologies and interests, then, there was no point in calling elections at the triumph of the revolution. Nicaragua "is on the road to socialism, even if we have to hold elections imposed by imperialism," said Bayardo Arce, another Sandinista leader and an ideological ally of Borge. That is to say, we're heading toward socialism, even if the people are against it, kicking and screaming. Taking a vote from below is a concession to imperialism, not a concession to the people. When the people are in power, it suffices that power votes.

After July 1979, power voted. The government of the country was supposedly assumed by the five-member

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Junta for the Reconstruction of National Government. The Sandinista directorate put only one of its members—Daniel Ortega—on the junta. He was given the vague title of coordinator for the four civilian members. But soon it became clear that while the junta's actions would be "coordinated" with the directorate, they would never be taken seriously. The directorate was the true government. It controlled the Council of State, a legislature of organizations. The directorate also dealt directly with the various government ministries and had placed its members in all the structures of power in the country: the armed forces, the police, the labor unions, the press, radio, television, and the tribunals for punishing alleged Somocistas.

THE POLITICIANS and the clergy who had joined in the rebellion soon discovered where the real power lay. Monsignor Miguel Obando y Bravo (who was recently appointed cardinal by Pope John Paul II) celebrated mass for the first New Year among the Sandinista high command. He had played a prominent role in opposing Somoza as far back as 1972. In that year he had refused to assist in the ceremonies to legitimize Somoza's reelection, and later put out a pastoral letter calling for change. He had also denounced Somoza for pillaging the international relief sent to Managua after the devastating earthquake of 1972. Perhaps Obando y Bravo believed that the church would receive the power it was due: various priests were made ministers, and it seemed that he might be given control of part of the public sector. But the Sandinista priests preferred the symbolism that their participation represented. Instead of giving state power to the bishop, they distributed among themselves the power that a clergyman's symbolism represented and applied it to their political ends.

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, one of the civilians in the junta, was similarly disillusioned. Mrs. Chamorro is the widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro Cardenal, the editor of *La Prensa*, who was assassinated in 1978 at Somoza's order. The general strike that followed her husband's killing was a catalytic element in the collapse of the Somoza regime. Her power base no longer existed (Somoza had destroyed the plant because *La Prensa* refused to be intimidated by the assassination), but the *comandantes* helped to bring it back into existence. Naturally, they preferred that Mrs. Chamorro have her power back—but they wanted her to use it only for the purposes of the new regime. They wanted to convert an important symbol into their national mouthpiece. But Mrs. Chamorro took seriously the tradition of independence that had left her a widow. She discovered that not only did she lack power in the government junta, but that she had begun to lose it in her own newspaper. The editor, her brother-in-law, Xavier Chamorro Cardenal, wanted *La Prensa* to become the official organ of the government. He even organized a strike against the paper. When the Sandinista *comandantes* later decided that it would be too much to take the newspaper away from Mrs. Chamorro, they gave official assistance to Xavier to start up *Nuevo Diario*, a pro-Sandinista paper.

Alfonso Robelo was another civilian on the junta. As a manufacturer of cooking oil and a leader of the council of private enterprise, Robelo was a symbol for the business community's support of the revolution. His powerlessness became clear at the beginning of 1980 in the negotiations over the Council of State. It was first agreed there would be 33 seats, 12 of which would be for groups under the direct control of the *comandantes*. But then it was announced that there would be 47 seats with a majority of 24 going to the *comandantes*. And at the beginning of 1980, Nicaragua signed its first major agreements with Moscow. Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo resigned in April 1980 to put pressure on the Sandinistas for their unwillingness to accept pluralism. They still believed that it was possible to be apart from the revolution without being against it.

The *comandantes* negotiated with the junta, and replaced Chamorro and Robelo with two more moderates, to keep up appearances. Meanwhile, there were no changes in the directorate.

ALL ALONG the Sandinistas had been divided into three roughly equal factions. Among these three groups, the Ortega brothers, Daniel and Humberto, were the critical figures. They were the sons of the owner of a bakery who in the mid-1960s sent his sons to the university in Managua. They grew up when the triumph of the Cuban revolution was still fresh, when the church, especially the Jesuits, was declaring its solidarity with the poor, and when the new Latin American Bolivarism was taking hold throughout the hemisphere. Castro was seen as the new "Liberator." Daniel and Humberto took up arms with the Sandinista Front soon after it was founded.

But the Front split in the early 1970s. The younger members, led by Jaime Wheelock, now the minister of agriculture, had different ideas, which came from the election of leftist Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970. They supported a struggle focusing not on rebellion in the countryside but on the organization of workers in the cities. They called themselves the Proletarian Tendency. They were pitted against the old guard of the Front, led by Tomás Borge, which followed the Cuban experience in staying in the mountains until conditions were ripe for revolutionary war. This faction called itself the Prolonged Popular War Tendency. When the Sandinista Front broke apart in the mid-1970s, the Ortegas tried to mediate, and ended up becoming a third faction. They called themselves the Insurrectional Tendency; others often called them *tercerista*. Their theory—which proved successful—was to use armed force to lead a wide opposition made up of alliances of all sorts. The Ortegas were the middle ground among the Sandinistas. In age they were close to the Proletarians. Because of their ideology and because they had traveled to Cuba, they were close to Borge and the Prolonged War faction. After the victory they were in a position to negotiate for both, especially because they had more men under arms than the others.

A leader of leaders, someone like Fidel Castro, can win

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THE PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS

Managua

RONALD RUIZ RUIZ, the director of the Sandinista social welfare institute for the region of Leon, looked nervous. He had just told me about the "mistakes" of the revolution—the petty corruption, the abuse of power, the economic blunders. Now he was going to explain how the Nicaraguan people feel about the jagged course the Sandinistas have charted for their country since 1979. People are worse off now than in Somoza's time, he conceded, "but they understand that we're in the imposed situation of war. We have more difficulties, but these are the costs of a better future. We're sure people will react against the causes of these problems—the administration of the United States."

If the Sandinistas have a case, that is it. But do Nicaraguans buy it? In a recent one-week visit to Nicaragua, I didn't find many who did. Few people I talked to believed that the sacrifices they are enduring now will lead to a better future. And far from rallying against Ronald Reagan, most blamed the Sandinistas for their country's current grim situation.

Many once-plentiful basic foods and consumer items—rice, beans, soap, toilet paper—are tightly rationed, and if they are available at all, it is only at sky-high black market prices. "The biggest problem isn't the prices, it's that there isn't anything," a shopkeeper in Managua's barrio San Judas told me. "All the businesses are closed. There are no materials." Prices for gasoline increased by 150 percent overnight at one point during my visit. The price of a three-minute phone call to the United States—not a luxury to the thousands of Nicaraguans with family in America—went up to 9,465 cordobas. (The official minimum monthly salary is 3,000 cordobas; cordobas trade on the black market at 500 to the dollar.)

There is much truth to the Sandinistas' contention that the U.S. compounds these difficulties. What little foreign exchange the country earns goes to pay interest on its $1.2 billion debt to American banks, or to funding the battle against the CIA-backed rebels. While the U.S. has encouraged international banks and lending agencies to help out other Latin nations by renegotiating old loans and granting new ones, it has pressured international financial institutions to deny new dollars to the Sandinistas.

In Somoza's last year milk production was 250,000 gallons per week. Now it is down to 5,000 gallons. Ronald Ruiz explains that the FSLN tried to subsidize the price of milk by holding down the price it paid to producers. As a result, dairymen either stopped producing or slaughtered their cattle for beef. Even the showcase government day-care center I visited outside Esteli receives only half as much milk per month as it is supposed to, and many government child nutrition facilities are relying on powdered milk supplied by foreign relief. Everywhere I went looking for milk, I was told, "*No hay*" (there isn't any). The best I could find was a can of powdered stuff—a steep 140 cordobas on the black market. Mothers chafe at rationing rules, which grant milk only to infants under a year old. One Managua grandmother repeated a Sandinista slogan in a tone of bitter irony: "and children are *los mimados*"—the spoiled ones—"of the revolution."

But popular resentment about the economy is nothing compared to hostility toward the military draft. The Sandinistas send every able-bodied male between 18 and 24 to fight the *contras*, and "voluntary" militia duty begins at 14. Many Nicaraguans believe that their kids are being used as cannon fodder. In my own brief visit, I saw two military funerals. A priest in Esteli, a town of only 40,000, informed me that 120 of his young parishioners had been killed in action last year. One elderly Managuan said: "We're losing a whole generation. Our young women are afraid that when they grow up, there won't be any husbands left for them." A farmer in Chinandega, who, like most other anti-Sandinista Nicaraguans I talked to, was afraid to let me use his name, told me that "Somoza never would have obligated anyone to defend him. He had the Guardia, which was bad, but at least it was voluntary. It's a crime to obligate kids to go up to the mountains to fight. . . . If this government is so nice, why does it have to order people to defend it?" At the Eduardo Contreras Market, I asked a 16-year-old named Henry if he were looking forward to serving in the military. He began to say no, then caught sight of a soldier standing within earshot. His face spread into a mock smile, and his eyes made an exaggerated glance in the direction of the soldier. "Of course!" he replied.

There is a massive propaganda effort under way to get people to cooperate with *Servicio Militar Patriotico* (the draft), and with the war effort in general. "SMP" has been spray-painted on practically every wall in the country. Billboard after billboard exhorts kids to sign up, with messages ranging from "A duty, A promise, An opportunity" to the less lofty "*Hay que cumplir*" ("You must serve"). The basic slogan is "*Lucha por la Paz*" (Fight for Peace), a rhetorical effort to turn people's deep exhaustion with the combat into enthusiasm. A variation on this theme is on

the consensus at the top while simultaneously winning the consensus at the bottom. But none of the Nicaraguan leaders—not the Ortegas nor Borge nor Wheelock—was immediately able to win at the others' expense.

In terms of presence, boldness, and showmanship, the Nicaraguan who most resembled Fidel was Eden Pastora, who belonged to the Insurrectionists. He was the most popular hero of the revolution. Operating under the nom de guerre of Commander Zero, he staged a spectacular raid on the National Palace in August 1978. He humiliated Somoza, freed important Sandinista leaders from jail, and inspired the population to revolt. Pastora, though, put his companions on guard. They feared his audacity: he might take them to the brink of disaster, or he might enjoy so much success that he would steal the show from all of his comrades.

In retrospect it's clear that Pastora's capacity to maneuver among the Sandinistas was less than spectacular. He

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display at the House of Support for Combatants, a whitewashed building near the airport where families go to send letters to their sons in the mountains, and to get the official word on how they're doing. On the outside of the building is an enormous painting of an AK-47 machine gun. A plume of smoke, formed into a dove of peace with stylized heart-shaped wings, curls from its barrel.

Other sights seem like inadvertent parodies of Big Brotherism. The slogan emblazoned on the front of the Ministry of the Interior, the headquarters of Tómas Borge's state security apparatus, reads: *Centinela de la Alegria del Pueblo*, which means "Guardian of the People's Happiness." On the back wall of a supermarket near the Ministry, a glowering portrait of Karl Marx looks out over shelves sagging under heavy stocks of catsup and Worcestershire sauce, but the meat counters only sell by-products like hearts and testicles. Perhaps the clumsiest piece of propaganda I saw was a TV broadcast of an old Soviet World War II movie, in Russian with Spanish subtitles. The main theme: how the Nazis had organized Soviet POWs into a traitorous army of national liberation. This was an obvious attempt to cast Nicaragua's own *contras* in the worst possible historical light; I wondered how many Nicaraguans would manage to stay awake long enough to catch the parallel.

But where propaganda fails, often surveillance serves. Just about everyone I spoke with glanced nervously over his shoulder as we talked. A cab driver, bitterly criticizing the Sandinistas as we drove through the streets of Managua, fell silent in mid-sentence when an army truck pulled up beside us at a stoplight; he rolled up his windows before resuming. Among Nicaraguans I talked to, the consensus is that the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), neighborhood organizations that issue ration cards, are dens of government spies. Russel Narvaez, an agronomist from Chinandega, told me that "a big part of the people running the CDSs are former agents of Somoza's system. Now they control us. On the 18th of July [the day before the FSLN took Managua], they were Somocistas. On the 19th of July, they woke up and they were Sandinistas." In Chinandega, I saw homes and offices where Sandinista supporters had spray-painted the words "*Contra*, you are being watched" or "You are on the list." Narvaez told me that his rooming house had been attacked by a Sandinista mob, which denounced the owner and the residents as "bourgeois" because the owner had supposedly left for Miami with all his money. According to Narvaez, the man had been dead for two years.

In general, however, Nicaraguans seemed not to believe what their government tells them, and, despite the risks, many offered their own versions of the truth. I was taken aback to hear many denounce the FSLN as Communists who had sold the country to the Soviet Union. Sales of *La Prensa*, the opposition daily, are brisk. There were complaints that the Sandinistas use the educational system to indoctrinate little children. One woman said, "I wanted to take my six-year-old grandson to my nephew's wedding in Miami, but he started to cry because he thought Ronald Reagan would kill him if he went to America." Several people lashed out at the FSLN for not negotiating with the *contras*.

Nevertheless, I didn't hear anyone express enthusiasm for the *contras*. No doubt this would have been the riskiest heresy of all, yet it is also true that many people see the *contras* as Somocistas, or have witnessed *contra* brutality firsthand. More fundamentally, I sensed that the lack of support for the guerrillas is simply a natural reaction to the war and social regimentation of the last six years. If this revolution broke its promises, then what would another one bring? Exhaustion and despair are not a recipe for rebellion.

If anyone epitomized this predicament, it is a woman whom I will call Marta Morales. As we sat in the sparsely furnished front room of her home in the working-class San Judas section of Managua, Marta showed me her most prized possessions: pictures of her 17-year-old son—and photos of his body, in an open casket, his face still caked with dried blood. The young man, a construction worker, was killed when his truck ran over a *contra* land mine in the mountains of northern Nicaragua.

After she showed me the photos, I sat and waited for her to denounce the *contras* and the *Yanquis*. Instead, she vented her anger on the Sandinista regime the *contras* are trying to overthrow. Why do they refuse to negotiate peace? Why do they send untrained boys to die far from home? Why can her family no longer get rice, milk, meat, or chicken? And why are they always being watched by the CDS, which denies ration coupons to those who complain? Marta's husband cut off our own conversation when a curious CDS member appeared at the front door. We talked about the weather for a while, and the CDS eventually went away. There was some silence. And then, with a tone of resignation, Marta said: "We were happy when we heard about the revolution. But now we've changed our minds."

CHARLES LANE

was left out of the directorate and outside the junta. He served first as a vice minister of the interior under his comrade Borge, whom he had freed from a year of prison and torture. But Borge later crushed Pastora by publicly repudiating some of his policy declarations. Pastora then transferred to the defense ministry, where he also served as vice minister. In July 1981 he finally resigned in disgust over the tone of the revolution and his failure to make his mark. He went into exile and then armed opposition. Like Augusto Sandino, the Nicaraguan rebel of the 1920s, Pastora was a pragmatic nationalist. First he failed to inspire the confidence of the scientific revolutionaries, and then, seeking external support for his rebellion against the Sandinistas, he failed to win the confidence of the CIA.

Over the last five years none of the nine *comandantes* (three for each faction) of the Sandinista directorate has been ousted, but the distribution of power among the three tendencies has shifted. The Proletarians have been

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distinctly losing in the face of the other two.

The Prolonged War group was the faction most committed to penetrating all government structures as a means of extending its control. As minister of the interior from the very beginning, Borge was powerful within the government because he controlled the state security apparatus, the prisons, and the Sandinista Defense Committees, which control the neighborhoods. Because of his arrests at the hands of Somoza, because of his age (he is a decade older than the other Sandinista leaders), his status as the only surviving founder of the Sandinista Front, his magnanimity (he said of Somoza's National Guard that "our revenge is to forgive them"), Borge was perhaps the *comandante* best loved by his own companions. But he fell short of being popularly accepted as the leader of the country. Although Borge talks like a strongman, he was not nominated as a candidate for presidency.

Borge's failure was a function of the Insurrectionists' strength. They held the army, and the coordination of the junta. This at first appeared to amount to little: Daniel Ortega was merely the messenger between the supposed civilian government and the decisions of the military junta. But then the Insurrectionists received an unexpected bonus: Ronald Reagan's warmongering.

THE North American elections in 1980 had consequences for Nicaragua. The reelection of Carter would have favored Borge. Borge's attitude toward the defeated was important for Carter's foreign policy, committed as it was to human rights. There are no death squads in Nicaragua, and at that time the repression had not yet begun against the Indians and the independent trade unions. Carter probably would have bargained with the Sandinistas and with North American legislators to make security concessions, as in the case of the Panama Canal. And it is unlikely that Carter would have approved the invasion of Grenada. This would have favored the quiet advance of internal control for Borge's people.

Reagan's aggressiveness, though, favored those Sandinistas who could guarantee internal control and external defense: in short, the Ortegas. Even Borge's internal controls began to help the Ortegas. Repression cooled sympathetic European leftists and the Socialist International. The governments of France, Spain, and Germany tried to follow policies independent of North America; North American liberals tried to block President Reagan's attacks. But the Democratic left, unwilling to acknowledge many of Reagan's accusations against the Sandinistas, had to at least admit that it was very strange that there were no elections. Which favored the uncharismatic Ortegas as well.

Daniel had the support of his brother Humberto, which was essential because Humberto was the chief of the new army. This makes for a twosome similar to the Castro brothers in Cuba. But Daniel is no Fidel; he's more of an intellectual, a poet, reserved. He lacks Pastora's charisma, and fails to inspire the affection that Borge, popularly known as "Tomasito," does. It is precisely for that reason that Daniel was originally chosen as coordinator of the junta.

By 1984 Daniel Ortega had been at least the symbolic head of state for five long years. He had not tried to steal power that he did not have, and gave no sign of a lack of discipline or a lack of heroism. He had behind him an imposing army, directed by his brother. In the midst of crisis—economic difficulties, the *contras*, the mining of ports, the North American threats—who would have been so petty to deny Daniel Ortega the presidency? Paradoxically, it was because Ortega was incapable of becoming the inspirational leader, the *caudillo*, that he gained the FSLN presidential nomination everyone else had been denied since 1979.

IN THE November 1984 elections, in which Ortega won the presidency, the Sandinistas won 736,000 votes, or 47 percent of the possible votes (1,550,000), 63 percent of the actual votes, and 67 percent of the valid votes (1,100,000). It's worth noting that six percent of the votes were disqualified because many of the voters (instead of voting for other candidates or not voting at all) preferred to place their votes for candidates who had withdrawn. This suggests that those candidates who withdrew from the race in protest of Sandinista harassment made a tactical error in urging voters to abstain. Had they not pulled out, it seems likely that they would have won many more votes. Abstention (25 percent) was not high.

Ortega was elected for a six-year term, and a constituent assembly was elected to formulate a new constitution in two years, with 61 places for the Sandinistas and 35 for six other parties: Conservative Democrats (14), Independent Liberals (9), Popular Christian Socialists (6), Communists (2), Socialists (2), and a communist splinter party (2).

In 1981 Borge had declared that the danger of elections for Nicaraguan pluralism was that the Sandinistas would get 100 percent of the vote. In 1984 he said that getting less than 70 percent of the vote would be a defeat for the revolution. That Sandinism should obtain, under pressure and more, over 60 percent of the vote is still not at all bad. How many parties would settle for much less? What's bad is the dream that the Sandinistas will have more than that: the dream to be not a part but the whole; the illusion, the claim, the desire that all of Nicaragua, like a single man, will line up behind one movement, one party, nine *comandantes*, and, finally, behind one president. That all should come under the control of one part that supposedly is all, knows all, and decides for all. That elections are finally not necessary, that neither are an independent press, opposition parties, independent businesses and labor unions, the church, and a separate culture. That differences and conflicts of opinion, of passion, of interests, neither exist nor should show themselves.

This fantasy of unanimity (as well as the reality of self-interest) among the *comandantes* postponed elections for five years at an enormous cost to the country. Unanimity was important in overthrowing Somoza, and unanimity would be necessary to stand up to a North American

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invasion, in the event that that happens. But as a political ideal it is suspicious. What advantage is there in imposing unanimity among the country's leaders? What would have been wrong with the three revolutionary tendencies' registering as parties, public discussion (instead of private haggling), civic competition (instead of civil war)? Would they have been less revolutionary? Less Sandinista? Less Nicaraguan? There could have been a continuation of the revolution by other means. This would have benefited civil society, breaking the military bloc that dominates it today. But many of the supposed revolutionaries called that "suicide."

A regime confident of its immense popularity doesn't need to arm ten percent of its population to defend against an invasion that would be immensely unpopular. Yet Nicaragua, one of the smallest and poorest countries in Central America, now has the largest military. In 1982, according to *The Economist*, there were 55,000 men in arms (including 2,000 Cubans) in Nicaragua. This was as many as in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador combined. Since then the armed forces in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have doubled to 117,000 men. In Nicaragua the state of alert has now mobilized 300,000 men, or ten percent of the population, according to the government. And this does not include the civilians who have been trained to mobilize in the event of a U.S. invasion.

DANIEL ORTEGA BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But suppose the United States did invade. Suppose the North Americans took all the ports and airports, the military and police barracks and campsites, the fortress above Managua, the National Palace, and the radio and television stations—that is to say, all that Somoza held. How many armed Nicaraguans would be needed to get rid of the North Americans? The same as overthrew Somoza: some 3,000. That many men, with the support of a national strike, would suffice.

But what would be bad, from the *comandantes'* point of view, is that the national strike would give power to the Nicaraguans without arms. It would decentralize the power that they've been centralizing these last five years. It would mean going back to zero and to the Commander Zeros, and to the civilians and the church leaders—and to the negative consensus. It would be to underline that they've feathered their nests: that the revolution was brought about by three million unarmed men so that nine armed men could come to power.

As one politically active Nicaraguan said recently, "We don't want a country where there's no free press, where the leaders travel surrounded by bodyguards with machine guns, where power is abused. We don't want a country where young people don't dare go to the movies, because they're afraid of being abducted for military service." The Sandinistas, this person went on, "see enemies under everyone's bed, and they respond to all situations with the mentalities of the military or the police. They have assumed the right to control anyone who does anything else, behaving frequently in a very arbitrary manner. There's arrogance and abuse of all classes. It's hard to classify this as revolutionary conduct, and the people are very much aware of it." All of this was said not by the editors of *La Prensa*, nor by Monsignor Obando y Bravo, nor by Eden Pastora. It was said by Domingo Sánchez Salgado, the presidential candidate of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party, an orthodox communist party.

It should be clear that the immediate cause of the civil war in Nicaragua is not the Reagan administration or the cold war. Rather, it is political conflict among the elites of the country over who should govern and how. Although the numbers of Central Americans who are university educated have grown explosively since 1970, they remain a small minority of the entire population. Still, this educated class feels that its academic preparation is a kind of divine mandate to improve the country from above. This obligation legitimizes the right to be in power. Struggles in this educated class can resolve themselves peacefully, as in Costa Rica, or they can explode, as in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In the case of Nicaragua the abuses of the Somoza re-

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gime led to the revolution, and then the abuses of the *comandantes* led to civil war. Unfortunately, since the 19th century, Nicaraguan elites have been in the habit of calling on foreigners to side with their faction. For a long time this made the United States the final arbiter of Nicaraguan politics; now it has delivered the country into the East-West confrontation. It isn't foreign threats that lead to civil conflicts or ancient domestic antagonisms from below that eventually rise up to disturb the top. Instead it is exactly the reverse: the rupture at the top brings into play the external threats and the conflicts from below.

Thus the chain of events is not: Russia pushes Cuba, which pushes Nicaragua, which pushes the Salvadoran guerrillas to get the United States out of Central America. Rather it is: the Salvadoran guerrillas, themselves university graduates, feel entitled to the Sandinistas' help (although the Sandinistas fear endangering their own situation); the Sandinistas feel entitled to help from Castro (although Castro is afraid that they will go out of control and will implicate him); Castro feels he has the right to Soviet help (although the Soviets preferred to withdraw their missiles from Cuba before facing a war with the United States). Castro has insisted that "he who brings about a revolution has no right to maintain it at others' expense, he must bear the same responsibility for the risks he takes."

There are signs that Cuba and Nicaragua feel that the Salvadoran guerrillas have already had their chance, and don't have the right to expect much more. Moscow's behavior in the face of the collapse of the Allende regime (documented in *La Union Sovietica en America Latina* by Isabel Turrent) doesn't suggest that the Soviets will risk themselves for Nicaragua. In the eyes of the Soviet Union, Nicaragua is a country with a "socialist orientation," not a country of the "socialist community." When Daniel Ortega made declarations in Moscow about the possibility of installing Soviet missiles in Nicaragua, the Kremlin hastened to contradict him. Missiles would be "a casus belli of incalculable consequences," Tass responded. The Russians "are not willing to let themselves become involved in the imbroglio in Central America, no matter what happens . . . That part of the planet doesn't appear within the strategic interests of the USSR."

REAGAN KNOWS THIS, and for that reason he's willing to intervene spectacularly with the Marines in Grenada and the *contras* in Nicaragua. The *supposed* danger to national security gives Reagan the opportunity to assert himself loudly. And the Sandinistas play the same game (as militarists in Latin America have always done) invoking national security. This has advantages for both sides: Reagan's reelection campaign benefited from the invasion of Grenada, and Ortega's election campaign benefited from the prospective invasion of Nicaragua.

That invasion has been announced at least three times. In March 1980 Nicaragua asked for an emergency meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations because it was about to be invaded. There was neither a meeting nor an invasion. In March 1982 the Sandinista daily newspaper *Barricada* announced that Nicaragua would be invaded the following day. It wasn't. On October 2, 1984, Daniel Ortega announced to the United Nations that the invasion would take place on the 15th. There wasn't one then either.

For his part, Reagan accuses the Sandinistas of preparing an invasion of the neighboring countries, to be the spear's point for Soviet penetration, and in that way to become a threat to Central America, Mexico, and the United States. The accusations by both sides completely ignore how counterproductive an invasion would be for the invader. But both countries prefer being sensational to being realistic. They make the whole world nervous for the sake of scoring points off each other.

Unfortunately, such madness is possible, and for that reason the trick works. Even Castro, who is solidly in power, who has allowed a million malcontents to leave Cuba, who has 16 percent of the population bearing arms, and who enjoys Soviet protection, still invokes national security for his own purposes. By the same token, the seizure of the Falkland Islands favored first the Argentine military and later Mrs. Thatcher. Even the torturers among the Argentine generals were celebrated as heroes in their home country—at least for a moment. In such cases it is only afterward that anyone calculates the huge human and economic costs of dragging a country into a "heroic" war.

THE DISPUTE as to how, by whom, and toward what end Nicaragua should be governed has already produced (according to the government) 7,000 dead, 6,230 orphans, and 142,000 homeless in the war zones. The Sandinista leadership—which complained that there wasn't enough opposition for there to be political pluralism, which extinguished where it could any manifestations of pluralism, and which didn't call for elections until it had no choice—can't complain. They have provoked an armed pluralism.

Within that opposition there is such pluralism that its various leaders can't even agree among themselves. Ex-Somocistas, disillusioned Sandinistas, disaffected civilian allies, and the armed Misquito Indians have different grievances, interests, and ideals, all of which are being used by North American interests—but which can't be reduced to those interests.

Their consensus is again negative: against the authority of the military junta, not in favor of the Yankee authority. That 15,000 Nicaraguans (more than the guerrillas had in opposing Somoza) are willing to die by taking up arms against the Sandinista regime is an opportunity that the American government takes advantage of, but it isn't a situation that can be created with its dollars. After all, no matter how many dollars are contributed, the opposition still contributes to the dead.

It was the assaults by the military junta against the indigenous Indian communities that opened the doors to the CIA along the frontier with Honduras and the Atlantic

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coast. It was the attacks on the political aspirations of fellow guerrillas that caused them to seek arms from outside. Eden Pastora wouldn't have taken up arms if he had been defeated in an election. It was the attacks on the civilian allies that caused some of them to lose hope in civil methods. It was the internal struggle for supremacy that caused the break between the elites in power and drove into civil or armed opposition the most popular hero of the guerrillas, two of the five members of the government junta, one vice president of the Council of State, two ministers, two vice ministers, and two directors of the central bank, various ambassadors, and many other officials. It wasn't an external authority that came and offered profits to some members of the revolutionary government to remove them from power and put them in its service. On the contrary, if anyone has benefited from the attacks by the external authorities it has been the victors—and not those who were ousted—in the internal struggle. With the external confrontations they have had a perfect pretext to increase their own stronghold.

There are those who argue that even if the *comandantes* had "behaved well" in calling for elections in 1979, the United States wouldn't have "behaved well." But this argument accepts the North American illusion that the United States is a moral authority and not an imperialistic power. What is important about the elections is not to get good grades before the supposed moral authorities; it is to avoid an armed insurgency that gives the imperialistic powers opportunities to intervene, and it is to convince those who are ready to take up arms that civic means aren't closed. If the *comandantes* had dissolved the junta and competed in elections among themselves and against civilians, the monster of a foreign power to the north would still exist, as it always has, but the United States wouldn't have a civil war to exploit. Nicaragua would be as badly off as perhaps Costa Rica, but not as badly off as it is today.

By V.E. Day the Allies had lost the peace.

How The Good War Went Bad

By Henry Fairlie

"THE LAST GOOD WAR"—so the war against Hitler is called. It was good in the sense that it had to be fought. By 1941 a man of monstrous designs, upheld by the unwavering support of his own people, had conquered most of Europe, and threatened to conquer the world. There was no doubt who were the good guys and who were the bad. But as we celebrate the victory now, we need to remember something else, and those of us who can remember need to tell it to those too young: after we had thrown our hats in the air on V.E. Day and V.E. Day + 1, the war did not seem to have been all that "good."

Europe was a sickening place on V.E. Day. There was the physical devastation, and we had wrought much of it, unnecessarily, by the saturation bombing of German cities: Hamburg, Leipzig, Dresden, Berlin. . . . There came the appalling revelations of the concentration camps, and although the crime was Hitler's and, by complicity and acquiescence, the German nation's, the evil seemed to be in our civilization. None of us felt blameless. Then with the peace there came the "displaced persons." They migrated in hordes over Europe, from lands that the Allies—the glorious victors—had agreed to divide, subjecting large parts of them to a new tyranny in the East.

Europe, the carrier of our civilization, seemed everywhere barbarous. After the Allies liberated Italy, the Italians strung up Mussolini and his mistress by their heels. In Greece the liberation had been followed only by a murderous civil war, Communist against non-Communist. After the liberation of Paris, the Parisians dragged into the streets the women who had slept with German officers, and shaved their heads. Was this *la France douce*? Over the whole of Europe there seemed to be only an evil spirit—vengefulness, bitterness, callousness, ferocity, distrust—the legacy of Hitler, certainly, but also of the methods we had used and licensed.

Britain and France had originally gone to war to defend the integrity of Poland. Now we acquiesced not only in its dismemberment but in its subjection to its age-old enemy in the East. Almost every promise we had made in the war—not least those in the Atlantic Charter—had been broken before V.E. Day. It was we who had declared war on Germany, not Germany on us; the good war we had begun had somehow changed its character. How—and when—and why?

There was the question of our methods. On V.E. Day + 1, when most undergraduates at Oxford had sore heads from the previous night's celebrations, about 50 members of the Oxford University Liberal Club were rounded up to attend a luncheon to be addressed by Pro-

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fessor Gilbert Murray, the great classicist, liberal, and humanist. As the president of the club, I gazed anxiously at the disheveled bunch he was to address. But then, in his high-pitched, almost over-cultivated voice, he began: "We have defeated the enemy in battle; it was necessary that we did so. But by the methods we have used, which have been the methods of the enemy, we may have lost the war. Certainly we may lose the peace." Fifty undergraduates stopped groaning over their hangovers. He did not quite say, "We have become the enemy." But we heard it in his voice. We all knew he was right.

AT SOME POINT the actual character of the war—the aims for which we were fighting—had been radically changed. That point came on June 22, 1941, when Hitler invaded Russia, and Churchill led Roosevelt in welcoming Russia as a full ally. Roosevelt then went a great deal further and treated Russia as a trusted ally as well, dismissing Churchill's resistance to Russian ambitions as evidence only of an antique imperialism and realpolitik. Once Russia had entered the war as a full ally, the war aims of the democracies were again and again subjected to the war aims of Russia.

I remember listening to the radio broadcast in which Churchill announced that, for all his long-standing opposition to communism, he welcomed Russia into the highest councils of the alliance. My mother, who was not given to political utterances, spat out in her Scots accent: "Mr. Churchill's gone out of his mind." Two years before, I had indulged in a schoolboy flirtation with communism, and asked her to knit me a red scarf with a yellow hammer and sickle. I was looking for a fight—with my schoolmasters, with her. But she refused the fight. She took up her needles and said: "If it's the only way to get you to wear a scarf. . . ." That diminished my rebellion. I agreed with her now: I could not understand why we had to welcome Russia as a full ally. We could have given support to Russia to fights its own war in the East, while the democracies fought theirs in the West.

It is worth recalling the popular attitude toward Russia after June 22, 1941, for this attitude was in fact a creation first of British and then of American propaganda. There was hardly any distortion our government's propaganda would not engage in to make Russia seem a noble, brave, generous, even potentially democratic country. Eleanor Roosevelt even got thousands of women in Britain and America to knit scarves and sweaters for the Red Army. (But not my mother.)

One of the recurrent debates in the Oxford Union during the war (as in Parliament) was about the "guilt" of the German nation, the German people. Those of us who protested with Burke that we did not "know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people" were often given a rough time in the warlike mood. But it was not just the character of Germany that was in dispute. Once Russia became our full ally, it was very hard to say that the Russians had become the major threat to Europe. I was an officer of the Oxford Union at the time, and the Foreign Office tried to stop these debates. I remember the hostility I aroused when in one of the debates I flung out: "The main threat to Europe after the war will not be 80 million Germans. It will be 200 million Russians." I was howled down by Communists, by Conservatives.

On both sides of the Atlantic, people were besotted with Russia. No ally was ever so excused. Russia had the answer to everything. I named it "What-about-Russia-time," because you could not say anything—you could not say, "It will not be possible to abolish poverty overnight after the war"—without someone in the audience shouting, "What about Russia?"

Of course, the surrenders at Yalta and Potsdam came out of the welcoming of Russia as a full ally. So did the surrender of many of the original war aims of the democracies. People rarely remember that the Atlantic Charter, defining those war aims, was signed by Churchill and Roosevelt on August 14, 1941, when America was not yet in the war *but Russia was*. That is a crucial and astounding little fact. Even when Russia was fighting Hitler, the democracies defined their war aims alone. But when the "United Nations," as the Allies by then called themselves, subscribed to the Atlantic Charter on January 1, 1942, it began to mean nothing at all, because these were not Russia's war aims.

MUCH OF the ferocity in the war, and in the acts of vengeance that accompanied the liberation and the peace, came from the need that many non-Communists felt to emulate the Communists in demonstrating their opposition to Nazism and Fascism. This was so convenient for Russia: it could impose its own tyranny with its own atrocities because everyone was using up energy against a defeated tyranny that was no longer capable of atrocities. In countless tribunals all over Europe after the liberation, the Russians and their Communist supporters in the different countries managed to establish a standard by which their political enemies could be condemned and eliminated as Nazi collaborators. They had used the partisan movements to get rid of their political opponents during the war, and now they used the tribunals after the war in the same way. And we hardly needed *Darkness at Noon* to warn us.

But take a different tribunal, another way we dirtied the peace after V.E. Day. The whole majesty of the Western heritage of the law was used to subvert that heritage in the Nuremberg Tribunal. Weighty jurists in every Western country (but not in Russia) protested against this travesty of the Western legal system. So did historians. So did merely cultured and moral men and women. If the victors were to "try" the vanquished for war crimes, then they should try themselves for often committing the same crimes. Who would try Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Travers "Bomber" Harris, the architect of the policy of saturation bombing of German cities? But it was not only a matter of our own "war crimes." If it was right to use the apparatus of the law to punish those responsible for exceptional crimes like the Holocaust, it was wrong to use it

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to punish errors of judgment and statecraft such as every defeated regime seems to have committed. "We used the methods of the enemy"—and used them in peace at Nuremberg.

There is not the slightest doubt that people in the American and British administrations were extremely uncomfortable over the Nuremberg Tribunal. So why did they let the sham be played out? Because the Russians wanted it—just as Rudolf Hess is still in Spandau because the Russians want it. We acquiesce in that barbarism, keeping a helpless old man in prison—alone.

But still this does not fully explain what had happened to Europe by V.E. Day. The invasion of Russia and its admission as a full ally transformed a war of European nations against European nations into a European civil war. Even before the war in Europe ended, partisan movements (in Yugoslavia, for example, and in Greece) were engaged in bitter civil war, as civil war was in effect being waged in some groups of the French resistance and the Italian partisan movement. But with the liberation, the civil war was extended beyond these armed bands, as Russia and its Communist allies in the liberated countries more or less dictated that those who were not against their enemies were concealed Nazis. People who had behaved reasonably honorably (if not very courageously) during the war were branded as Nazis and collaborators in order to eliminate them. All civil wars are more ferocious than ordinary wars, and as the hand of brother was turned against brother the vileness spread across Europe.

The Russians could not hope to win by attracting Europeans to their ideology of communism, but they might be able to win if they could create the image of Communists as the true nationalists. In order to arouse their own people, after all, they had done much the same at home: the heroes in the great wartime movies in Russia were the czars. Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Catherine the Great—they might all have been card-carrying members of the C.P.

THERE IS a lesson in all of this for today. The policy of the West should as far as possible avoid playing the Russian game of using foreign policy to foment the conditions of civil war. It is not in the interests of the West to meet ideology with ideology, or to define its rivals and enemies primarily in terms of ideology. In those conditions loyalties become confused, as they do in civil war when even families are divided against each other. It is not all that easy for hungry peasants to distinguish between the promises of ideologies; and in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, Russia's ideology (unlike Hitler's) can still seem—at least initially—to be "on the side of the future," especially the future of an emerging nation.

It is far better to rely on the appeal to true nationalism. Nationalism has been so abused in this century that we hardly realize that it is not only the strongest political idea in the modern world, but a welcome one as well. Nationalism has proved to be a far more reliable resister to Communism than any other "ism"—conservatism, socialism, liberalism, or even Christianity. People will fight for their nation, sometimes before it has been born.

By going into countries as an opponent of Communism, America too often finds itself debating on Russia's ground—and, even worse, conceding the high ground of nationalism to the Communists. It is far more convincing in the Third World to point out that Russia is a Bear than to point out that it is Communist. Russia would be a threat if it were not Communist. It behaves today exactly as it has behaved for 500 years, since Ivan III and Vassily III set out to expand the Muscovy state. If Communism is its ideology now, then Pan-Slavism was its ideology a hundred years ago. Before it created the Third International, it claimed to be the Third Rome. These are all excuses for its age-old state policy of "Advance."

AMERICA MUST unite the nations it seeks to protect; it ought not to join Russia in dividing them. For even by V.E. Day, Russia was hardly interested in making Communists; it was using Communism to advance its state policy. The reason its European allies do not understand or share America's jittery obsession with the Soviet Union is that they have lived as neighbors of Russia long before it was Communist, and think it is more important to understand the historic policy of all Russians, czars or commissars, than to make its Communism the main reason for resisting it.

Harold Macmillan once told me of an exchange he had during one of his visits as prime minister to Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow. "I said to Mr. Khrushchev that Russia now reminded me of the Early Christians. They had been prophesying that the Second Coming—the end of the world—would occur at the end of the first century. But the first century came to an end, and there was no Second Coming. So from being a militant, millennial movement, they had to settle down to the long centuries of converting the world by missions. From being unworldly, they became worldly. So the early Communists in Russia had believed that there would be a World Revolution soon after their own. But it has not happened, and they should now adapt themselves to the fact, like the Early Christians. Mr. Khrushchev was so excited by this that he said, 'I must ask our theologians about that,' and then turned round to an assistant in the room and asked: 'Have we any theologians left, or have we killed them all?' "

That is recognizably Russia—even Mother Russia. She's been there a very long time; we should not play her game. As long as America behaves in Central America as if it must take sides in a civil war, it throws a tremendous and unnecessary advantage to Russia. For Russia can and will use the weapons of civil war, as it did 40 years ago in Europe, without inhibition, whereas the Western tradition is full of checks against using those weapons. The Communists were held back in Western Europe after 1940—not by appeals to a different ideology, but by the nationalist appeals of men as different as Charles de Gaulle and the postwar Social Democratic prime minister of Italy, Alcide de Gasperi. □

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THE DEATH PENALTY: AN EXCHANGE

In our issue of April 15, Mayor Ed Koch of New York wrote in defense of the death penalty. David Bruck, a South Carolina criminal lawyer, has written in TNR *arguing against the death penalty.*

MAYOR ED KOCH contends that the death penalty "affirms life." By failing to execute murderers, he says, we "signal a lessened regard for the value of the victim's life." Koch suggests that people who oppose the death penalty are like Kitty Genovese's neighbors, who heard her cries for help but did nothing while an attacker stabbed her to death.

This is the standard "moral" defense of death as punishment: even if executions don't deter violent crime any more effectively than imprisonment, they are still required as the only means we have of doing justice in response to the worst of crimes.

Until recently, this "moral" argument had to be considered in the abstract, since no one was being executed in the United States. But the death penalty is back now, at least in the southern states, where every one of the more than 30 executions carried out over the last two years has taken place. Those of us who live in those states are getting to see the difference between the death penalty in theory, and what happens when you actually try to use it.

South Carolina resumed executing prisoners in January with the electrocution of Joseph Carl Shaw. Shaw was condemned to death for helping to murder two teenagers while he was serving as a military policeman at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. His crime, propelled by mental illness and PCP, was one of terrible brutality. It is Shaw's last words ("Killing was wrong when I did it. It is wrong when you do it. . . .") that so outraged Mayor Koch: he finds it "a curiosity of modern life that we are being lectured on morality by cold-blooded killers." And so it is.

But it was not "modern life" that brought this curiosity into being. It was capital punishment. The electric chair was J. C. Shaw's platform. (The mayor mistakenly writes that Shaw's statement came in the form of a plea to the governor for clemency: actually Shaw made it only seconds before his death, as he waited, shaved and strapped into the chair, for the switch to be thrown.) It was the chair that provided Shaw with celebrity and an opportunity to lecture us on right and wrong. What made this weird moral reversal even worse is that J. C. Shaw faced his own death with undeniable dignity and courage. And while Shaw died, the TV crews recorded another "curiosity" of the death penalty—the crowd gathered outside the death-house to cheer on the executioner. Whoops of elation greeted the announcement of Shaw's death. Waiting at the penitentiary gates for the appearance of the hearse bearing Shaw's remains, one demonstrator started yelling, "Where's the beef?"

For those who had to see the execution of J.C. Shaw, it wasn't easy to keep in mind that the purpose of the whole spectacle was to affirm life. It will be harder still when Florida executes a cop-killer named Alvin Ford. Ford has lost his mind during his years of death-row confinement, and now spends his days trembling, rocking back and forth, and muttering unintelligible prayers. This has led to litigation over whether Ford meets a centuries-old legal standard for mental competency. Since the Middle Ages, the Anglo-American legal system has generally prohibited the execution of anyone who is too mentally ill to understand what is about to be done to him and why. If Florida wins its case, it will have earned the right to electrocute Ford in his present condition. If it loses, he will not be executed until the state has first nursed him back to some semblance of mental health.

We can at least be thankful that this demoralizing spectacle involves a prisoner who is actually guilty of murder. But this may not always be so. The ordeal of Lenell Jeter—the young black engineer who recently served more than a year of a life sentence for a Texas armed robbery that he didn't commit—should remind us that the system is quite capable of making the very worst sort of mistake. That Jeter was eventually cleared is a fluke. If the robbery had occurred at 7 p.m. rather than 3 p.m., he'd have had no alibi, and would still be in prison today. And if someone had been killed in that robbery, Jeter probably would have been sentenced to death. We'd have seen the usual execution-day interviews with state officials and the victim's relatives, all complaining that Jeter's appeals took too long. And Jeter's last words from the gurney would have taken their place among the growing literature of death-house oration that so irritates the mayor.

Koch quotes Hugo Adam Bedau, a prominent abolitionist, to the effect that the record fails to establish that innocent defendants have been executed in the past. But this doesn't mean, as Koch implies, that it hasn't happened. All Bedau was saying was that doubts concerning executed prisoners' guilt are almost never resolved. Bedau is at work now on an effort to determine how many wrongful death sentences may have been imposed: his list of murder convictions since 1900 in which the state eventually *admitted* error is some 400 cases long. Of course, very few of these cases involved actual executions: the mistakes that Bedau documents were uncovered precisely because the prisoner was alive and able to fight for his vindication. The cases where someone is executed are the very cases in which we're least likely to learn that we got the wrong man.

I don't claim that executions of entirely innocent people will occur very often. But they will occur. And other sorts of mistakes already have. Roosevelt Green was executed in Georgia two days before J. C. Shaw. Green and an accomplice kidnapped a young woman. Green swore that his companion shot her to death after Green had left, and that he knew nothing about the murder. Green's claim was supported by a statement that his accomplice made to a witness after the crime. The jury never resolved whether Green was telling the truth, and when he tried to take a polygraph examination a few days before his scheduled execution, the state of Georgia refused to allow the examiner into the prison. As the pressure for symbolic retribution mounts, the courts, like the public, are losing patience with such details. Green was electrocuted on January 9, while members of the Ku Klux Klan rallied outside the prison.

Then there is another sort of arbitrariness that happens all the time. Last October, Louisiana executed a man named Ernest Knighton. Knighton had killed a gas station owner during a robbery. Like any murder, this was a terrible crime. But it was not premeditated, and is the sort of crime that very rarely results in a death sentence. Why was Knighton

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electrocuted when almost everyone else who committed the same offense was not? Was it because he was black? Was it because his victim and all 12 members of the jury that sentenced him were white? Was it because Knighton's court-appointed lawyer presented no evidence on his behalf at his sentencing hearing? Or maybe there's no reason except bad luck. One thing is clear: Ernest Knighton was picked out to die the way a fisherman takes a cricket out of a bait jar. No one cares which cricket gets impaled on the hook.

Not every prisoner executed recently was chosen that randomly. But many were. And having selected these men so casually, so blindly, the death penalty system asks us to accept that the purpose of killing each of them is to affirm the sanctity of human life.

The death penalty states are also learning that the death penalty is easier to advocate than it is to administer. In Florida, where executions have become almost routine, the governor reports that nearly a third of his time is spent reviewing the clemency requests of condemned prisoners. The Florida Supreme Court is hopelessly backlogged with death cases. Some have taken five years to decide, and the rest of the Court's work waits in line behind the death appeals. Florida's death row currently holds more than 230 prisoners. State officials are reportedly considering building a special "death prison" devoted entirely to the isolation and electrocution of the condemned. The state is also considering the creation of a special public defender unit that will do nothing else but handle death penalty appeals. The death penalty, in short, is spawning death agencies.

And what is Florida getting for all of this? The state went through almost all of 1983 without executing anyone: its rate of intentional homicide declined by 17 percent. Last year Florida executed eight people—the most of any state, and the sixth highest total for any year since Florida started electrocuting people back in 1924. Elsewhere in the U.S. last year, the homicide rate continued to decline. But in Florida, it actually rose by 5.1 percent.

But these are just the tiresome facts. The electric chair has been a centerpiece of each of Koch's recent political campaigns, and he knows better than anyone how little the facts have to do with the public's support for capital punishment. What really fuels the death penalty is the justifiable frustration and rage of people who see that the government is not coping with violent crime. So what if the death penalty doesn't work? At least it gives us the satisfaction of knowing that we got one or two of the sons of bitches.

Perhaps we want retribution on the flesh and bone of a handful of convicted murderers so badly that we're willing to close our eyes to all of the demoralization and danger that come with it. A lot of politicians think so, and they may be right. But if they are, then let's at least look honestly at what we're doing. This lottery of death both comes from and encourages an attitude toward human life that is not reverent, but reckless. And that is why the mayor is dead wrong when he confuses such fury with justice. He suggests that we trivialize murder unless we kill murderers. By that logic, we also trivialize rape unless we sodomize rapists. The sin of Kitty Genovese's neighbors wasn't that they failed to stab her attacker to death. Justice does demand that murderers be punished. And common sense demands that society be protected from them. But neither justice nor self-preservation demands that we kill men whom we have already imprisoned.

The electric chair in which J. C. Shaw died earlier this year was built in 1912 at the suggestion of South Carolina's governor at the time, Cole Blease. Governor Blease's other criminal justice initiative was an impassioned crusade in favor of lynch law. Any lesser response, the governor insisted, trivialized the loathsome crimes of interracial rape and murder. In 1912 a lot of people agreed with Governor Blease that a proper regard for justice required both lynching and the electric chair. Eventually we are going to learn that justice requires neither.

DAVID BRUCK

IN MY ARTICLE on the death penalty I said that some people seek to evade unpleasant responsibilities imposed upon us by the law. Mr. Bruck illustrates this point. He subtly identifies those who support capital punishment—as does the U.S. Supreme Court—with a 1912 advocate of lynch law. He demands empirical proof that capital punishment deters murder, perhaps unaware that in *Gregg* vs. *Georgia* the Supreme Court, after an exhaustive review of the literature, found that for many potential murderers capital punishment "is undoubtedly a significant deterrence."

However, when it comes to empirical proof that innocent people are executed, Bruck is prepared to rely upon his personal intuition that execution of the innocent "will occur." Not *has* occurred, but *will* occur. He lamely states that "doubts concerning an executed prisoner's guilt are almost never resolved." Finding no death case to support his argument, Bruck resorts to the robbery case of Lenell Jeter. But the system vindicated Jeter. The system worked! And yet we are urged to accept this case as proof that capital punishment will murder innocents. All this is shameless double talk, and succeeds only in marring the death penalty debate.

It is not surprising that Bruck's attempts at logic come to nothing. "[Koch] suggests," writes Bruck, "that we trivialize murder unless we kill murderers: by that logic we also trivialize rape unless we sodomize rapists." This is a fatuous remark, suited only for propaganda. The state does not kill murderers any more than it kidnaps kidnappers. Kidnappers are imprisoned. Convicted murderers are executed. Both receive their full rights under the law, a protection they denied to their victims. If some murderers are being unfairly excluded from the full penalty of the law, then justice requires that we extend capital punishment to all who deserve it.

The central point I sought to make is that a truly civilized society need not shrink from imposing capital punishment as long as its procedures for determining guilt and passing sentence are constitutional and just. The overwhelming weight of historical, philosophical, theological, legal, and sociological evidence in the experience of Western civilization supports this view. But first we must be able to distinguish between the innocent life of the victim and the guilty life, justifiably forfeit, of the murderer.

It is in this area that I most strongly question Bruck's judgment. The hero of his essay is the perpetrator of two murders of "terrible brutality," who, Bruck tells us, faced death with "dignity and courage" after attempting to equate his crimes with our legal system. Bruck calls this a "moral reversal." Small wonder he opposes capital punishment. Bruck views this debate through the eyes of the murderer.

EDWARD I. KOCH

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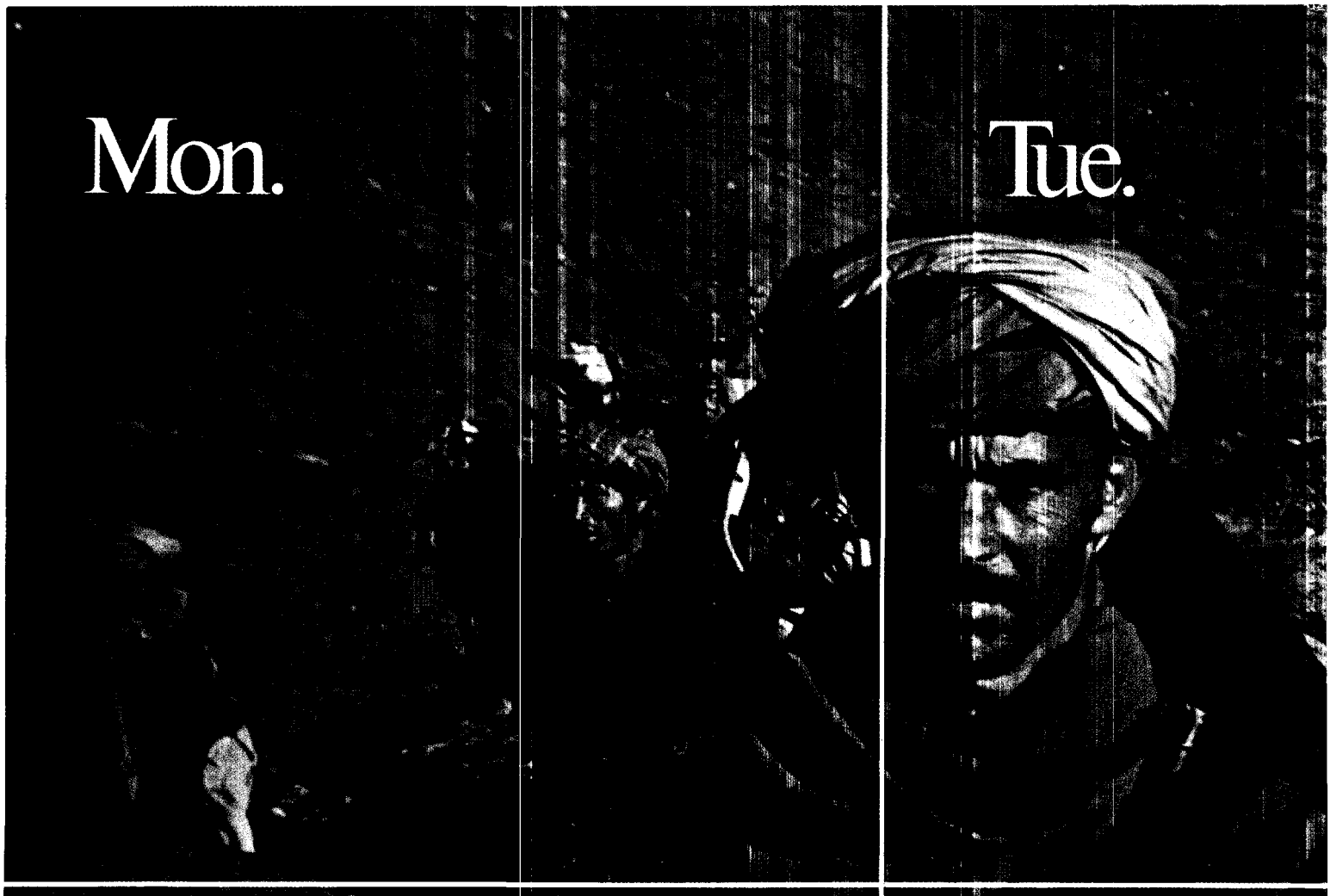

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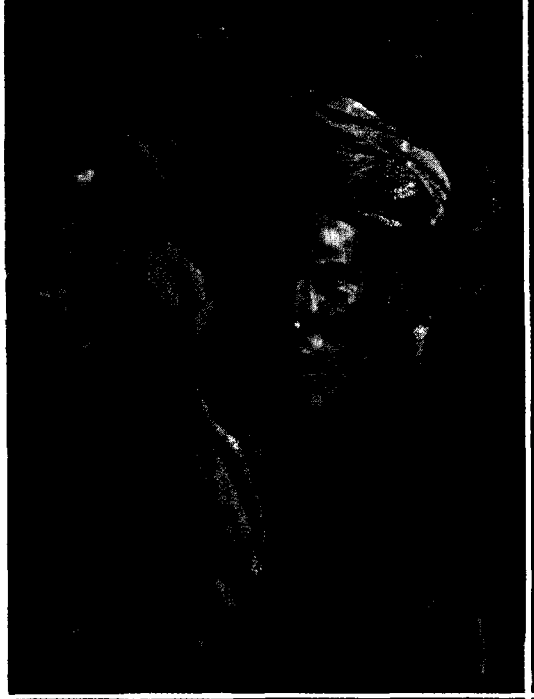

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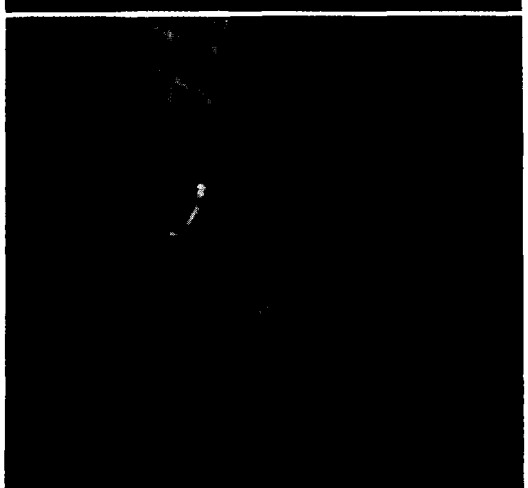

Sethi has used her contacts there to great advantage. On New Year's Day last year, Fidel Castro granted her his first interview with an American reporter in over five years. President Pinochet of Chile met with Sethi for his first interview with an American reporter in 10 years. And her interview with Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Van Dong was a catalyst in the administration's efforts for the release of all Amerasian children in Vietnam.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Anarchies and Devotions

What Have I Done to Deserve This?, a Spanish film, is like a skillful team of comic acrobats, tumbling away furiously, defying laws of gravity—both kinds. Yet, for all its skill, I didn't laugh once; and gradually, through the film, I found out why. Pedro Almodovar, who wrote and directed, is wickedly inventive, morally anarchic, but not quite enough. Centrally and finally, he falters.

What Have I Done to Deserve This?
(Cinevista)

Tokyo-Ga
(Gray City)

The picture begins with shots of kendo combat, in full Japanese rig, interrupted by the credits in cartoon lettering. The kendo academy is in Madrid. Soon we see one of the kendo combatants, now naked, step into the shower. A cleaning woman, in her 30s, watches. He beckons her into the shower, and she joins him for passionate (though quite visibly impossible) sex. It's this woman, played by Carmen Maura, who is the center of the film. We go home with her, meet her family, neighbors, and subsequently, other employers. (Household chores included, she puts in an 18-hour day.)

Her family includes: a vain taxi-driver husband who bosses her mercilessly while he reminisces about an affair he once had in Germany with a woman for whom he forged some Hitler letters; Maura's mother-in-law, who locks up her bottles of mineral water and sells them to the rest of the family; Maura's teenage son who pushes dope; her younger teenage son, who (she knows) is available to older men. Her neighbors include a congenial prostitute whom we first see when she comes in to borrow a whip, and an abrasive woman who hates her angelic-looking daughter of ten or so—a child who revenges herself with secret telekinetic powers. Maura's other employers include a kleptomaniac woman who steals her watch when she takes it off to work.

As is proper in farce, especially improper farce, each of the characters pursues his or her ego trail with fierce concentration on personal goals. The trails slide through and around one another with the surprise that comes from consistency, the consistency of blinkered vision. Almodovar's actors, with one important exception, are perfectly cast—from Maura's mother-in-law, whose eyes never actually can be seen behind her gleaming specs, to the angelic little girl who can peel off wallpaper by willing it. Almodovar has been making films for ten years, has done a number of (apparently) wild shorts and two (apparently) wild previous features, and now can work with frightening accuracy, like a chef in a Japanese steak house slicing beef and vegetables so swiftly that you expect to see his fingers on the grill. So much that Almodovar does is so dexterously naughty that I kept asking myself: Why don't I laugh?

The last sequence clarified the answer. In the course of the film we have seen Maura volunteer as a voyeuse when her whore friend needs a spectator to please an exhibitionist client; have seen her give her younger son for "adoption" to a flagrantly homosexual dentist so that she won't have to support the boy; have seen her murder her husband and get away with it because it looks like an accident. But we have also seen Maura (who has a marked resemblance to Irene Papas) as a loving mother and daughter-in-law and an understandably responsive woman. All the other characters are kept strictly within their eccentric solipsisms; she is an earth mother, the support of her family and world, and these qualities just don't fit with her amoral actions, which she seems almost to borrow from the others around her. Moreover, the actress herself, at least as she is directed here, is so womanly and warm that she seems a different breed of being from the others. Consciously or not, we keep asking what she's doing in this film.

This contrast is rammed home at the end when, her mother-in-law and older son having gone back to Ma's native village, Maura is left alone in the tiny family flat. She has a scene of quiet desolation, a suggestion of suicidal intent, until her younger son returns from his dentist-protector. Mother and boy embrace tearfully. The whole sequence jars, by Almodovar's own criteria, and retrospectively it explains why the entire film, for all its black sparkle, isn't funny. Joe Orton doesn't have a heart. Almodovar, whose film has a tone very much like Orton's plays, lacks the Englishman's full measure of amorality. Almodovar plunges into moral anarchy with a lifeline of "heart" around his waist.

And he worsens matters by his final shots, immense checkerboard facades of the apartment house in which Maura lives and of similar characterless beehives. It's more moral apologia that fails. At the last, after sharp-toothed disregard for convention, Almodovar tries to *explain* his characters' amorality with a few dabs of glib urban sociology: they are the way they are because of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Mikey and Nicky. Welcome rerelease of Elaine May's 1977 drama, technically imperfect but thematically firm. Betrayals, sexual and tribal, within the criminal world, made resonant for all of us. Unique, unremitting, important. (Reviewed 1/1&8/77)

My Favorite Wife. Melbourne, today. A marriage rips apart, ripping the partners as well. John Hargreaves and Wendy Hughes are excellent. (4/29/85)

The Sure Thing. Pleasant college romance, breezing across the country from New England to California. (4/8/85)

Streetwise. Nonfiction, exceptionally well-made. The lives of teenage street people in Seattle opened for us. (5/13/85)

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faceless modern life. Nonsense, both as sociology and as art. If Almodovar wants to take on the risks of an Orton—whose work he knows, I'd guess—he needs to take on *all* the risks, without mealymouthed apologies.

Wim Wenders, the German director whose most recent feature was the monstrous *Paris, Texas*, has since busied himself with three nonfiction films about film. The first, shown in New York a few months ago, was a 17-minute piece called *Reverse Angle*, mostly about Wenders in the editing room, working on his feature *Hammett*, still unreleased in the U.S. Seventeen minutes of pompous introspection. The second, shown at the same time, was a more rewarding 45-minute piece called *Chambre 666*. This was the number of his hotel room at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982. Wenders placed a chair in the middle of the room, fixed a camera facing it, and invited 15 directors of films at the festival to sit in that chair and talk about the state of the art. The most disappointing of the lot, because of one's expectations, was R. W. Fassbinder. The most interesting were Jean-Luc Godard and Michelangelo Antonioni, because of the integrity of their doubts.

Now Wenders has done a 92-minute film about a trip to Tokyo, called *Tokyo-Ga*. (He says it means "Tokyo Pictures" in Japanese.) At the start he tells us that he made this trip because of his reverence for Yasujiro Ozu, who died in 1963. For anyone who, like me, shares this reverence, that's reason enough for the trip. He says that he wanted to find out whether any of Ozu's images—or people—are still visible in Tokyo.

Much of the footage of the city is quite ordinary, of no particular acuteness. But Wenders has done two interviews that make *Tokyo-Ga* imperative for an Ozu admirer. One is with Yuharu Atsuta, who photographed many of Ozu's films after 1941. He discloses much about Ozu's methods and shows us a tripod that Ozu designed so that outdoor shots could be done at a lower level than the usual tripod allows.

The pearl of the film is an interview with Chishu Ryu, that marvelous actor who worked with Ozu from 1935 to the end, who was the father in *Tokyo Story* and is now only a little older than he was supposed to be when that masterpiece was made in 1953. Ryu speaks

ju·di·cious

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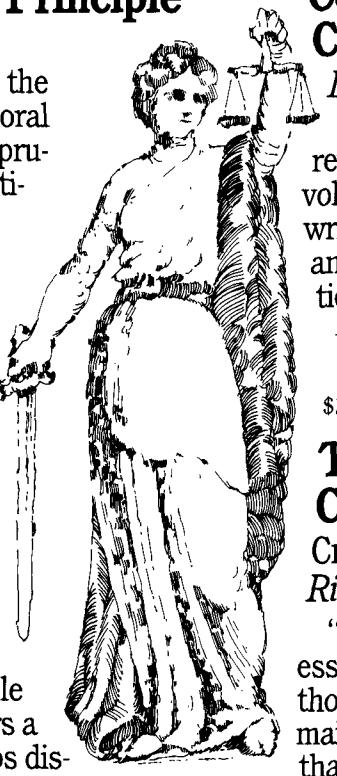

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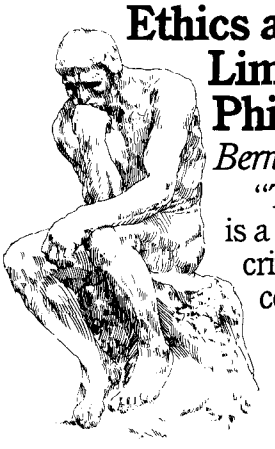

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modestly, insisting that he did only what Ozu asked him to do; but we who have seen him in *Tokyo Story* and *End of Summer* and *An Autumn Afternoon*, among others, will infer that Ozu knew what Ryu was contributing.

Then we accompany Ryu on a visit to Ozu's grave in a crowded cemetery. The small simple black tombstone bears only the single character *mu*, which, says Donald Richie, "is usually translated as 'nothingness' but which suggests the nothing that, in Zen philosophy, is everything." Ryu stands looking at the grave for a moment. Then the old actor, immortalized by the artist he helped with his own art to immortalize, presses his palms together before his face and bows. It is not moving, it is breathtaking. I can never forget it.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Best of Broadway

Theater critics I respect have proclaimed that *Biloxi Blues* (Neil Simon Theatre) and *Joe Egg* (Longacre) may signify the reawakening of the commercial stage from a yearlong (decadelong?) coma. But traveling down to see the best that Broadway has to offer, I couldn't shake off thoughts of David Denby, the movie critic who recently assailed, in the pages of *The Atlantic*, the pretensions and artificialities of American theater. Would these highly praised shows simply be further documentation of his "theaterophobia," more grist for his bilious thesis that the best of Broadway adds up to less than the worst of Hollywood?

Biloxi Blues
by Neil Simon

Joe Egg
by Peter Nichols

It would be easy enough to write Mr. Denby's sequel for him, though I still resist his extreme conclusion. I found *Joe Egg* shallow and boring, and *Biloxi Blues* mildly meretricious. But these occasions also reinforced my sense that quality judgments by disenchanted critics such as Mr. Denby (or myself) are beside the point, given a problem that has passed the boundary of aesthetics and entered the realm of sociology. One must first recognize that Broadway theater has lost its local audience. The passionate New York theatergoer who used to dominate dinner conversation with chat about Broadway shows is now leading the table in discussions of *Purple Rose of Cairo* and *Jewel in the Crown*, while those who today buy tickets to the holdover hits are not an audience but a congeries—an aggregate of tourists, expense account entertainers, refugees via bridge and tunnel. Under such circumstances, every show that opens in New York has an obligation not just to entertain but to reconstitute that scattered native community, and this I think is what critics wishfully forecast when they announce a Broadway resurrection.

Has Lazarus risen as a result of these new productions? Well, maybe he's wiggled his big toe a little. While the patrons for *Joe Egg* remain dutiful, taciturn, detached, those at *Biloxi Blues* bear a growing resemblance to a collective. I'm not sure this means Neil Simon is now ready for installation in the pantheon of the blessed, but his theatrical memoir of his days as a raw recruit in World War II certainly deserves points for momentarily reunifying the audience. The trouble is (can't suppress those opinions) that the very jokes that unite the audience manage to disunite the play. Mr. Simon sometimes reminds me of Witwoud in Congreve's *Way of the World*, a character who can't resist interrupting polite conversation with Restoration one-liners (then called epigrams). That the conversation Simon interrupts is his own makes the habit no less maddening, for there are times when he seems on the verge of generating real dramatic tension.

Biloxi Blues announces itself early when Simon's surrogate, Eugene (the stripling from *Brighton Beach Memoirs*), declares his intention to survive the war, to become a writer, to lose his virginity, and to fall in love. If the last two ambitions suggest a romance or farce, the others augur something more penetrating, and it is Simon's ability to engage his characters in issues of consequence that has encouraged critics to speak of a new dimension to his talent. This emerges mainly in the conflict between the sickly but stubborn Jew Epstein, and Sergeant Merwin J. Toomey, the Southern sadist out to break his spirit. But it is also reflected in Epstein's relations with the other trainees, a familiar roster of dumb ethnics, urban deadbeats, would-be crooners, and sensitive homosexuals, most of whom subject Epstein to a variety of anti-Semitic humiliations. The plot reaches its climax in Epstein's final encounter with Toomey. Drunk, bitter, brandishing his pistol, Toomey challenges Epstein to report to him for threatening the life of a recruit—a character reversal for the villain first invented by Herman Wouk—in *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*—as an altruistic last-ditch effort to turn "a subhuman into a soldier." Epstein gets his delayed revenge by sentencing the sergeant to 200 push-ups.

ALTHOUGH this hardly original plot is frequently Simonized with gags (falsely accused of homosexuality, Epstein thinks of "An Agatha Christie story—Murder by Fellatio, Fellatio on the Orient Express"), or with sententious sermonizing (Epstein warns Gene not to censor his memoir because "once you start compromising your thoughts, you're a candidate for mediocrity"), it carries some authentic moments of tension and electricity. Regrettably, however, Simon has wrapped up these moments in a conventional service comedy, a compound of *M*A*S*H*, *Stalag 17*, and "Sergeant Bilko," revolving around Eugene and his cohorts in the Biloxi barracks. Many of the jokes stem from their incorrigible habit of breaking wind—there is enough farting in *Biloxi Blues* to re-inflate the Hindenburg. There is also the obligatory put-down of the mess hall chow, particularly the chipped beef ("They ought to throw this stuff over Germany—the whole country would come out with their hands up")—funny enough until it culminates in the defiant Epstein's punishment for refusing to eat it. These extraneous flippancies turn into outright comic pandering in the second-act brothel scene where Simon virtually abandons his concern with truth of

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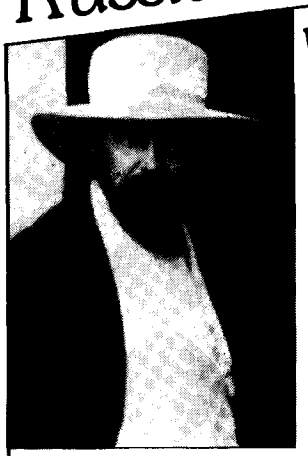
character in order to reactivate his laugh machine. Morons evolve into wits, sexual innocents into studs, anything to watch the meter rise. One male virgin announces there are "at least 52 [sexual] positions . . . I saw a dirty deck of cards once." Another protests: "My first time? Are you kidding? My second time. The first time they were closed." The same character who has just told Eugene you don't lose interest in sex after five or six orgasms tells him not to give it up for good if he doesn't like it the first time.

If the sexual aspects of the play seem the most forced, it is partly because the two women in the cast are such stick figures—the good-natured whore with whom Eugene loses his virginity, the idealized virgin with whom he falls in love. Seeking "the perfect girl," Gene finds her at a USO dance in the person of a parochial school bobby-soxer whose "all-time favorite book" is *The Great Gatsby*; his puppy-love courtship during a clumsy dance ("Would you get insulted if I told you I thought you were pretty?") is out of high school prom movies of the forties. This uncertainty of tone, this compound of nostalgia, kitsch, and farce, ultimately undermines one's confidence not just in Simon's seriousness of intention but in the authenticity of his memories, and even Gene's final accounting of the fate of the characters (Daisy marrying a Jewish doctor, Gene beginning to write for *Stars and Stripes*, Epstein missing in action) seems to be lifted from the ending of *American Graffiti*.

THE production almost manages to disguise these schizoid splits. It has been meticulously directed by Gene Saks, whose sense of theatrical placement and style is virtually impeccable, and features a handsome minimalist setting by David Mitchell that conjures up images of trains, barracks, brothels while preserving a gracious atmospheric distance. The acting is also wonderful, from Bill Sadler's menacing Toomey, his jaw muscles flexing like biceps, through the spectrum of oafish recruits, to the Epstein of Brian Miller; Miller's performance shows exemplary control, particularly in the way he manages to maintain the integrity of his character through a hailstorm of comic shtick.

Matthew Broderick's Eugene is wonderful too—at times too wonderful. Shambling through the play like a

Russian Literature...



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sloppy schlemiel—Holden Caulfield as played in turn by Jerry Lewis, Stan Laurel, and Eli Wallach—Broderick has become to Neil Simon what Jean-Pierre Léaud was to Truffaut, the very personification of his youthful hopes and tribulations. Unfortunately, the actor is also beginning to personify Simon's shrewd capacity to manipulate audiences. Broderick's broad takes, his shuffling walk, his urban accent, even the way he often appears to be breaking up on stage, sometimes seem more calculated than real, especially by contrast with Miller's uncompromising portrayal of Epstein. Like his author, Broderick is not always certain whether he is creating theater or vaudeville.

Still, one must respect the spirit of those spectators, more lively, more engaged, more *at home* than any Broadway crowd in years. Someone once said that the success of popular art is measured by whether or not it demeans the audience. On the basis of that criterion, *Biloxi Blues*, for all its slickness, comic engineering, and ambivalent tone, is surely worthy of a muted cheer.

I'M UNABLE to raise even half a cheer for the new revival of *Joe Egg*, though on the face of it Peter Nichols's study of a couple staying breezy while coping with a spastic and retarded child would appear to be a more sober effort. *Joe Egg* is an early example of what I once called "plays you're not allowed to hate"—a genre devoted to subjects of race, women's rights, homosexuality, terminal disease, and handicapped children, designed to terrorize the spectator into thinking that if he doesn't show sufficient sympathy toward the material, he'll be accused of insensitivity toward the issues. Quite a few really awesome turkeys have enjoyed critical acclaim and lengthy runs as a result. *Joe Egg* is a cut above such heavy guilt trips as *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* and *Children of a Lesser God*, but it employs the same sort of moral blackmail.

It is also insufferably talky and cute. The husband, a teacher, adjusts to his intolerable situation by adopting a variety of roles and accents and strategies, including sly conversations with the audience regarding the poor creature he calls this "vegetable" and "living parsnip." His wife confides, "I join in these japes to please him—it helps him live with her," describing his perky attitude as a "useful anesthetic." It is actually a smoke screen for sentimentality, though *Joe Egg*, however disguised, is still pretty soggy. The couple's relentless sangfroid in the face of the most shattering events—not only the child's condition, but their own adulterous affairs and the husband's efforts to end the child's misery through an act of euthanasia—soon proves extremely wearying. By contrast, some good honest sentiment might be bracing. The play ends with the husband leaving the wife without her knowing it, a "Blow out your candles, Laura" moment that left me feeling like the terrible-tempered Mr. Bang.

Jim Dale as the husband is less an actor than a stand-up comic, therefore not convincing as a teacher. He has charm without depth and a face that is almost totally lacking in plasticity. Stockard Channing as the wife, more accomplished if less ingratiating, vacillates between edgy sophistication and kitchen dowdiness, reflecting the playwright's uncertainty about the nature of his characters. The usually gifted designer, Marjorie Bradley Kellogg, has provided an overdecorated flowered suburban setting that exceeds George Dillon's worst nightmares. All it needed was those awful plastic birds. As with Arvin Brown's direction, the design never made it clear whether the tastelessness was planned or inadvertent. The issue seemed not to bother the audience, though, who left the theater more concerned with juggling feelings of privilege, relative good fortune, and ennui.

BORDER DISPUTES

Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans by Alan Riding

(Knopf, 385 pp., $18.95)

Some of the Central Intelligence Agency's station chiefs in Latin America used to joke during President Reagan's first term about "looking for the ayatollah." There was a gung-ho attitude in the agency, led by its director and abetted by then-national intelligence officer Constantine Menges. There was pressure to report that Mexico was on its way to becoming "an Iran-next-door," and even though there was nothing substantial to support this contention, agents and analysts had the choice of proving a negative or—worst of stigmas—appearing naive.

The weight of unreality grew so heavy that last year Menges's successor, veteran intelligence officer John Horton, resigned in protest rather than adapt the National Intelligence Estimate on Mexico to what he considered alarmist standards. The estimate was supposed to be the last, best word on what was going on south of the border; and Horton, it seems, did not think the ayatollah had a role in it.

Fortunately, the public does not have to rely on the CIA for its information. It now has at hand an estimate as intelligent as anyone is likely to find on the condition of Mexico today. Alan Riding's best-selling book is an elegant, comprehensive essay on that nation very much as it is, not as one might want it—or fear it.

Mexico, so close and yet so foreign, has always provided fertile ground for the ambitions and the anxieties of American politicians, whether the Alamo is under attack, the Zimmerman telegram is on the wire, or illegal aliens are massed for a silent invasion across the border. It is easy to conjure the spectral menace of a crazed and hostile world that begins just south of Brownsville. Most people in the United States (and many Mexicans) are befuddled by the labyrinths of Mexican society and government. And the problems created by Mexico's mix of oil riches, corruption, poverty, population, and frequently repressive politics, and by the proximity of regional turmoil, are real enough. (Consider the recent case of U.S. drug enforcement agent Enrique Camarena, murdered, it seems, by Mexican police officials; they were themselves deeply involved in narcotics trafficking, and their confessions were apparently beaten out of them by their erstwhile colleagues. What better image of ruthlessness, lawlessness, and corruption?)

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Still, as Riding makes abundantly clear, the danger of confused alarms about the future of Mexico is that finally they lead nowhere, except toward ignorant meddling by the United States that can turn real problems into real disasters. Riding has an especially sophisticated understanding of this dangerous dynamic. He spent 13 years in Mexico, most of the time as the correspondent for *The New York Times*. Apart from his perfect Spanish, he had a remarkable level of cultural fluency. He was comfortable with many of the most influential figures in the Mexican government, and generally they appear to have been comfortable with him. Riding's access and understanding allow him to examine Mexico's weaknesses in detail, and also to make the system's contradictions comprehensible and to appreciate its strengths.

THE essential accomplishment of modern Mexico has been to maintain stability, wringing a functional peace from the bloody tumult of its past. Neither a democracy in conventional terms nor a dictatorship, Mexico's political system under the all-powerful PRI, or Institutionalized Revolutionary Party, bears less resemblance to the ayatollah's Iran than to Mario Puzo's Mafia. It is not the product of fanaticism, but of cold-blooded pragmatism. Its ideology is survival, and it has been flexible enough to bend with shifting domestic and international political currents. Traditionally it is ruthless, but traditionally it also delivers what its people want.

"Almost instinctively," Riding reports, the PRI "co-opts emergent opposition leaders, either giving them influential jobs in government or neutralizing them with money . . . Opposition groups that stray outside this context are more vulnerable to direct repression." Riding mentions massacres of leftist students in 1968 and 1971, and the subsequent disappearances of other dissidents. "But the government also considers resort to such tactics a poor reflection on its bargaining talents: it should be the fear—and not the fact—of unrest and repression that makes negotiations possible." What the PRI normally does with its opponents, in other words, is make them offers they can't refuse.

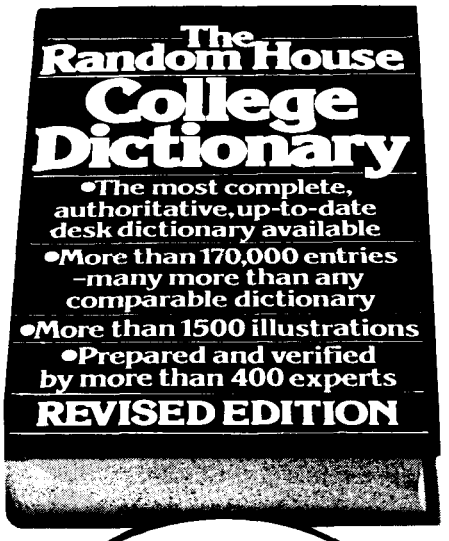
Mexico's notorious corruption becomes "a practical way of bridging the gap between idealistic legislation and the management of day-to-day living," and the concept of corruption "often becomes indistinguishable from that of influence, which flourishes among the family and friends of leading politicians and blends naturally into the old tradition of favor and patronage. . . . Today, corruption enables the system to function, providing the 'oil' that makes the wheels of the bureaucratic machine turn and the 'glue' that seals political alliances." From such contradictions comes a synthesis that seems to work, decade after decade, however strange or unseemly it may be in North American eyes. And if Mexico's regime did not presume to look outside its borders, one presumes the Reagan administration would be content with it. It is authoritarian; it is stable; it is basically, if not slavishly, pro-American on most issues.

And yet administration officials look for the ayatollah.

It is reasonable to be wary of developing dangers, certainly. Riding carefully points out that while "nothing has proven more wrong than predicting the demise of Mexico's political system," there "is little room for complacency. Beneath the surface calm, the repercussions of change, growth, urbanization are subjecting society to unprecedented strain." But the peculiar alarmism evident in Washington seems to go beyond that. Sometimes it appears less protective than vindictive. Mexico has crossed the United States recently, and the attitude of many members of the administration is, plainly, that it has no right.

WASHINGTON is intent on bringing the Caribbean basin firmly back under its control, now going so far as to push openly for the overthrow of Nicaragua's government; and Mexico, with legalisms and peace initiatives, keeps getting in the way. The administration sees the contagion of communist revolution sweeping up from the south toward the biggest domino of all—Mexico itself—but the Mexicans are somehow blind to it. They may not embrace the Sandinistas as they once did, but they seem congenitally ill-disposed toward efforts to oust them.

In this context Mexico's diplomatic initiatives become, as a leaked White House document put it, something to be "trumped." And looking for the ayatollah, even in a figurative sense, is a way of insinuating that Mexico is inca-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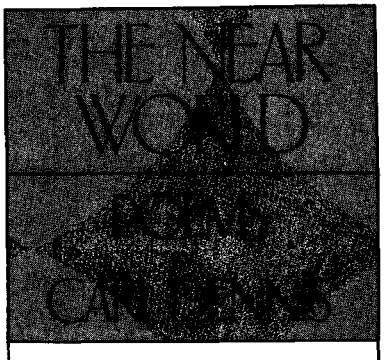

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pable of keeping its own house in order, much less making suggestions about anyone else's.

MEANWHILE Washington has come to define "democracy" as the way our friends govern themselves. And from such a standpoint, if Mexico looks less than friendly on certain issues, it is deemed less than democratic. Even as the administration helps Mexico with its disastrous finances, behind-the-scenes administration officials encourage criticism of Mexico's political abuses and fuel the enthusiasm for its right-wing, business-oriented opposition parties. The opposition, in turn, criticizes the PRI for not supporting U.S. policy in Central America.

On this difficult juncture between foreign and domestic policy, Riding's analysis is clear and dispassionate. He outlines the complicated relations between successive Mexican presidents and Fidel Castro, the history of Mexican aid to Nicaragua's Sandinistas, and Mexican cooperation with El Salvador's insurgents. He presents the divisions within President Miguel de la Madrid's own cabinet over these issues. And then he presents the problems as de la Madrid would have to see them. "A more conservative foreign policy alone would not appease domestic conservatives, but it would alienate liberals and leftists who give relatively more importance to foreign affairs." De la Madrid might distance himself from Cuba and Nicaragua and El Salvador's revolutionaries

> without gaining credibility and influence in Washington. Mexico clearly cannot afford to withdraw from Central America, to allow the fate of a strategic region to be defined entirely by others. It also cannot endorse a U.S. strategy that appears to feed instability. Its only remaining option, therefore, was to remain politically aligned with revolutionary forces in the region. As in the past, the new government looked for alternatives, but found that Washington—and history—permitted none.

Riding concludes with a warning that, thus far, has been little heeded by the administration. He has tried throughout the book to draw a contrast between the upwardly mobile, highly Americanized middle classes, the part of the Mexican population to which Washington pays the most attention, and "the ordinary Mexicans," most of them peasants or the children of peasants, whose roots have more spiritual depth—in the mysticism of the Catholic church and the Aztec Temple—and whose patience, unless sorely tested, has much greater endurance than most Western cultures have seen. "By trying to make the country more superficially democratic, more Western, more 'presentable' abroad," Riding cautions, "the system's roots in the population have weakened. It has become less truly democratic because it is less representative of real Mexicans. The more the system responds to the Americanized minority, the more blatant will be the contradictions within the country." The greater the chance, one might say, that there will be an ayatollah to look for.

CHRISTOPHER DICKEY

Christopher Dickey's book on the United States and Nicaragua will be published in the fall by Simon and Schuster.

A REVELATION

Women and Angels by Harold Brodkey

(The Jewish Publication Society of America, 176 pp., $30)

In an elegant "limited edition" the Jewish Publication Society of America has loosed upon American literature a book of substance, and perhaps of consequence, and it has not been critically noticed. I am not sure what accounts for the delinquency of the critics, who regularly expend inappropriate levels of energy upon the most banal efforts of fiction, but that they have been delinquent in the case of Harold Brodkey's new book I do not doubt. Sensationalism alone should have attracted their attention. Though more and more portions of Brodkey's *Party of Animals*—his work-in-progress that seems to be his life's work—have been dribbling out of late, it is fair to say that for many years now Brodkey's considerable presence on the literary landscape has been the product of his considerable absence, that he has been treated like an important writer merely because he promised to be an important writer. You would have thought that critics who have credited the claim would have taken this opportunity to put it to the test. But again it appears that the requirements of criticism have been interfered with by the requirements of commerce. Small publishers of large writers are no match for large publishers of small writers.

The publication of this book, in any event, comes not a moment too soon. Brodkey *absconditus* was becoming tiresome. Where art was expected, there was only gossip. Now it is clear that after all there may be art. This book is indeed a sensation, and not solely for its success as a tease. It is comprised of three chapters, fragments of the tarrying novel, preceded by an ignorant and insufferably self-important introduction on the subject of the author's Jewishness. Two of the fragments, "Ceil" and "Lila," have already appeared in *The New Yorker*. They constitute a series of nasty revisions of the most platitudinous of all premises of American Jewish fiction, the son's trouble with the mother (in this instance, with the foster mother, too).

They are not especially impressive, except to establish Brodkey as an unpleasant man immensely alive. Their subject, most fully developed in "Lila," is the tyranny of need. The author is for it, and not against it. These are some of the ugliest construals of human relationship that I have ever seen. The controlling assumption of the bond between the foster mother Lila and the adopted son Wiley Silenowicz (Brodkey's embarrassingly exact representative) seems to be that dependence is the secret of love. The only commitment of which the heart may be certain, Brodkey seems to be saying, is a commitment founded on the weakness of the other. Extorting love, as Lila thinks of it.

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"Lila" is the sad and sadistic tale of Wiley's watch over Lila's degeneration, while making a study of himself as "a bad person." It describes the adolescence of the son and the aging of the foster mother as the mutual manipulation of each other's pain. There is some relief near the end. Wiley undergoes in his imagination a vivid (and brilliantly written) metamorphosis into middle-aged womanhood, and extracts from it an uncharacteristic sensation of sympathy, a sudden grasp of the utility of "unselfishness" in a generally hard life. As Lila lies dying, there occurs their only conversation without cruelty. The scene is deeply touching (like Naomi Ginsberg's parting plaint, "Get married Allen / Don't take drugs," at the end of *Kaddish*). But really the effect is owed only to the remission of the aggression. When the author concludes the story with the exhortation to "make what use of this you like," the reader is returned to his world without mercy.

THE FIRST TWO chapters of Brodkey's book leave you thinking many things, but not a thing that prepares you for the third. It is called "The Angel," and it is one of the most astonishing pieces of prose I have been blessed to discover. It begins like this:"Today The Angel of Silence and of Inspiration (toward Truth) appeared to a number of us passing by on the walk in front of Harvard Hall—this was a little after three o'clock—today is October twenty-fifth, nineteen-hundred-and-fifty-one." It proceeds to describe in detail the appearance of this illumination ("The shadow came first . . ." followed by a "facedness, a prow of knowing making Itself known"), and then the permutations of Wiley's psyche in its presence. Since the story is so strange, and for the purpose of conveying both the strictness of its conception and the sloppiness of its execution, both of which are typical of mystical texts, I must give a representative page:

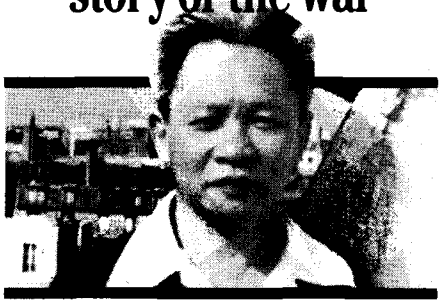
> It existed in front of me, It had only to exist in my sight and as the major sweetness and crisply, almost burning center of the field of my attention, It had only to be There in Its Very Real Presence *in front of me*, for Its Literal Existence, Its True Presence to precipitate in me a changeable and varying conviction about many things and a Great Love for It, and This Conviction and This Love, this immense burden of meaning and awe loosened my self-control violently every few seconds, so that my inner state was one of varied heats of pieties, madnesses, catatonias, bits of peace, of grace, the varying convictions of Final or Real Meaning and of my struggles of will not to expect further moments and a return to silliness and doubt and emptiness—that is, my will still struggled to be a Will That Mattered and to be The Will that dominated my conscious existence—this even in the presence of So Awesome a Will as that of The Seraph, or The Minds Behind The Seraph—and this came and went, these opposed heats and states of the soul, or states of mind, burningly and varyingly, like a flame, like one's heartbeat without seeming to have any nature of a paradox any more than one's usual heartbeat does—I mean one's own heartbeat, that variable and many parted, confers, with a reason, a rhythm, that a kind of invariable or unvarying meaning exists so long as my heart beats.

I know of nothing like this in the literature of the day. It takes courage to write about God (much more courage than it takes to write about religion). If *this* is what Brodkey is up to, he may be up to a lot.

The duration of the vision is not long, only an hour and some minutes, though by the standards of mystical experience that is rather a substantial helping of holiness. (St. Teresa, for example, was careful to calculate that her raptures rarely lasted longer than 20 minutes.) Brodkey's attempts to describe the numinous object of the vision, and to name it, are awkward and frantic, which is fitting for a work written under the shock of such a communication. Sometimes the writing is awful, but it seems genuinely overwhelmed. In any case, it is not as an essay in theosophical description that "The Angel" is unforgettable. It is a report not of the deity, but of the disturbances in the author's very sentient soul, of the commotions of identity that result from its access to the godhead. Brodkey is not rapt, or lost in absorption; he remains, even in the presence of this "steady and unparticled fire," a monster of consciousness. The story is about the reception of revelation, about which it is startlingly convincing, and perfectly in place in a significant strain of mystical literature.

Brodkey's subject is a classical one—the pressure on the self of the apocalyptic longing. What is the condition of one whom revelation has failed to redeem? That is what happens (or rather, does not happen) to Wiley Silenowicz in Harvard Yard. He sees God and survives. The profound puzzlement over the con-

A Vietcong leader's story of the war



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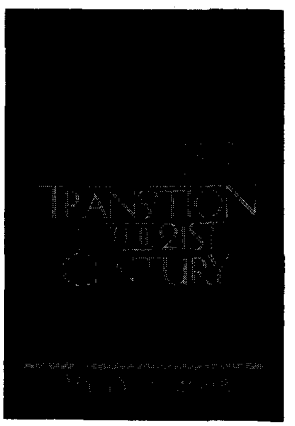

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tinuity of his self is his great theme. For he had expected discontinuity, as befits the appearance of an angel on a Cambridge afternoon. "Final rightness would explode you—The Angel's was not final. . . . The Angel did not end my life. . . . No finality—such as the rising up of the dead—occurred to make this clearly the ultimate moment. . . . Perhaps it is impossible to give up one's nature at first or perhaps ever. . . . What we had was enough even for someone greedy of spiritual glory but it was not the ultimate." Brodkey, in short, is a disappointed apocalyptic. The extinction, or at least the transformation, that promised to be an essential part of such an experience failed to come.

The perdurability of the self in the presence of the divine has the consequence for Brodkey of its spectacular aggrandizement. This is an ego that even God could not destroy. And here Brodkey's massive vanity coincides with one of the characteristic spiritual motions of modernity. "If the truth is not final, then it is not greater than me beyond all endurance. . . ." He writes wildly, later, of a "universal disrespect in us—because the power—love or force—was never in fact absolute—irresistible—final," of "the possible *universal reality of rebellion—disrespect as making itself into a truth*," of "Impiety. Self-defense. Rebellion. Whatever." This is grand and familiar. It is the secular man's last resort in his refusal to relinquish completely the spiritual scale of sacred life: the religious inflation of the self.

Writing recently in *The New York Review of Books*, Harold Bloom briefly mentioned Brodkey as an heir of Whitman. For the magnitude of his identity, he is; but Whitman was *too* secular. It is Emerson, rather, who was America's true pioneer in the salvaging of God by the swelling of the self. It was he who recognized that there may be no other alternative to the disenchantment of the world. For such minds rebellion is only the most drastic form of reverence; divinity is protected by the memory of its disappearance.

WHITMAN, Emerson—these are, again, big claims. (Denis Donoghue has compared Brodkey to Proust, and in an uncharacteristically juridical manner pronounced the work-in-progress "a work of genius.") Is Brodkey really one of them? The literary and spiritual authenticity of "The Angel" makes you think so. And yet, and yet. Even in "The Angel" there are traces of something smaller, signs that suggest an immaturity unworthy of the material. There is the occasional eruption of an incomprehensible vulgarity—in a moment of doubt, for example, "I knew The Seraph was bullshit." And there is the systematic introduction into this story of sublimity of an embarrassing sexual insistence, of the rankest form of masculine confidence. Brodkey writes of "the sloppy Armageddons of fucking girls"; of the Seraph speaking "homosexually"; of flirting with the angel "as in any romantic situation"; of experiencing "toward the end of the manifestation . . . a headache and considerable nausea and an erection"; and so on.

Now there is no contradiction, obviously, between mystical illumination and carnal intensity; Brodkey has an ancient tradition that he can invoke. But

THE DIG

They will come to us one day,
Digging through the debris of sunken cities
Down to our yard, and find the pit
Of our brick-lined barbecue
And compare it to ruined altars
And wonder what unknown god we prayed to,
Whether a blood-drinker or a great-souled friend,
Who, for a few ears of corn,
Would have showered us with blessings
Had fate not tied his hands,
A god that the diggers will hope
They don't believe in,
Seeing how he let his worshipers
Die away, their fields buried,
Their language lost.

Then nothing will be left of the house
But crumbled foundation stones
And maybe a few toys that couldn't rot,
A plastic rake and mower
Which they'll interpret as tomb gifts,
Miniature tools for our dead to bring along,
Like the soldiers of terra-cotta
Found in the tomb of an emperor,
A whole army of half-size silent men.
But what a nation of home-owners we must have been,
They'll conclude, not to have imagined more
Waiting in our afterworld
Than lawns to be mowed, leaves to be raked,
The same old maples and sycamores.

What will it matter to us then
If they can't guess the forest and the farm
We dreamed about? Why should it matter now
How many mistakes they'll make
As long as we can imagine their large hearts
Humbled by how little we'll seem
To have asked of life, or saddened
To think how they came too late
To help us widen our small wishes
To the width of theirs,
The wish for joy as well as quiet.

CARL DENNIS

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his version of sacred sex is a long, long way from the Song of Songs, to put it mildly. It is, rather, the sort of crudity and erotic unloveliness that some of Brodkey's earlier writings ("Innocence" in particular) have led you to expect. This is not mysticism; it is machismo. And it is the tritest kind of literary wickedness, as further evidenced by a strange attack on "our being Middle Class, our training in *Respectability*, in self-willed conformity," and so on. Before God's glory, you would have thought, sociology would fall away.

THE MOST offensive of Brodkey's confusions of sexual ecstasy with sexual power came a few years ago in a poem called "Jewlove," senselessly published by *The Paris Review*. It tells, in pages of misogynist free verse, of making love with a Jewish woman in Rome ("Jew-Ovid and his Hebrew whore"), and tells of it cheaply ("Inchoate in the hotel light, see / the monstrous visage at each crotch— / liar's zero, talented Jewish tongue, / *voice les deux* Yiddim . . ."). A bit of Jewish anti-Semitism, this, and a petty sort of blasphemy, which is the uninteresting sort. But it presaged, at least, Brodkey's most peculiar conceit, which is that he is essentially a Jewish writer.

Why must everything that a Jew does be Jewish? It should suffice for it to be what it is, which in the case of Brodkey's work is very valuable. Unless, of course, it is already Jewish, in the sense that it has a natural origination in some part of the tradition. Brodkey flatters himself that his work does. This, on the basis of an admitted acquaintance with "the Bible (in English) and one or two books on Talmud." He writes without irony that "my childhood decision was that observance was not the heart or soul of Judaism," which reminds me of the silliest sentence that Cardinal Newman ever wrote. (He dated his religious change to the age of nine.) In fact, many of Brodkey's Jewish thoughts are quite without foundation. There is no such word, for example, as "Yiddim." More to the point, the dilemma that forms the interior drama of "The Angel" is the exact opposite of the Jewish dilemma. For a start, there is, throughout the Jewish tradition, a distinction, established at Sinai, between revelation and redemption; and one of its many spiritual blandishments is precisely to protect against the disappointment that the one may not entail the other.

Moreover, messianic disappointment is the Christian problem, not the Jewish problem. The Jewish problem, rather, is the deferral of salvation, and the postponement of the immediate experience of the divine. The history of Jewish messianism has been the history of the more or less consistent refusal of the Jews to accept a messiah. The Jews prefer to wait. (Wiley Silenowicz's opposite number in fiction, and in some ways the most "Jewish" figure ever created by the most "un-Jewish" of writers, is John Marcher of *The Beast in the Jungle*, Henry James's devastating tragi-comedy of eschatological expectation.) Firm in its conviction that the world is already a sufficient theater of meaning—a conviction best exemplified by the observances that Brodkey scorns—traditional Judaism has sought, rather successfully, to contain the hunger for transformation. Brodkey is not entirely unaware of this. He observes that the angel in Harvard Yard is a kind of "Jewish defeat." It is. Still, judging by the canned antinomianism of his introduction, Brodkey must be kindling to Judaism's somewhat subterranean currents of apocalypticism. This is more proof, if more proof were needed, of the glibness with which Judaism's most esoteric and excitable teachings are being appropriated. (Gershom Scholem has been the source of many a cheap thrill.)

The point is not to pass on what is Jewish and what is not. I mean, rather, to urge Brodkey (and not him only) to leave it alone. Jewishness matters little to his literature and his literature matters little to Jewishness. But his literature matters a great deal, for literature it certainly is. At last there is a contemporary American writer who insists on metaphysics, on the possibility of spiritual incident in the city, on the preferability of experience to tradition. The angel brings good news.

LEON WIESELTIER

UNITED STATES OF ANOMIE

Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton

(University of California Press, 355 pp., $16.95)

Laments about the dissolution of social bonds are nothing new. "All that is solid melts into air" has been a refrain ever since the industrial age began and religion and traditional mores lost their firm hold on everyday life. In the 19th century, intellectuals—their battles for emancipation largely won—turned from calls for liberty to warnings about anarchy. Instead of focusing on the spoils of victory, they worried about the looming costs. Mill sighed at the spiritual narrowness of utilitarianism, Coleridge preached against individualism, Tolstoy lamented the moral emptiness of autonomy, Kierkegaard calculated the price of agnosticism, and even Marx acknowledged that the history of progress wreaked havoc on the family.

The modern sociological tradition came into being at least in part as a response to radical individualism run amok. Comte and Tocqueville traced the unraveling of our social ties. Emile Durkheim's seminal study of individualism revealed a startling correlation between urban life and both suicide and insanity. Individualism is now a synonym for alienation, and modern sociologists from Theodore Adorno and David Reisman to Robert Nisbet and Peter Berger have reminded us of the high cost to community and morals paid by a society devoted to self-realization and autonomy. Durkheim offered the text: "What is in fact characteristic of our development is that it has successively destroyed all the established social contexts . . . and in such a fashion that nothing has been developed to replace them." John Dewey supplied the chapter and verse: "Individuals who are not bound together in associations, whether domestic, economic, religious, political, artistic, or educational, are monstrosities."

In their American manifestation, symptoms of this exhilarating mon-

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strousness have been scrutinized at least since Tocqueville eloquently diagnosed them in *Democracy in America*. They have never been far from the minds of our psychologists and analysts; just pick up a book by Fromm or Bettelheim or Horney. Most recently, Alasdair MacIntyre has lamented the signs of atomism in a philosophical context in *Beyond Virtue*, and John Diggins has regretted them in a historical context in *The Lost Soul of American Politics*.

GIVEN this ubiquitous, often even clichéd literature, it is something of a surprise to come upon a book by a distinguished American sociologist and four junior colleagues that manages not merely to rehearse the shopworn dilemmas of individualism, but to give the impression that it has discovered them. The authors take their title, and more than a few of their sundry organizing categories, from Tocqueville, and are indebted to precursors as various as John Donne (whose apt 17th-century verse beginning " 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone" is cited) and Alasdair MacIntyre (whose categories are deployed with a kind of eclectic abandon). Nevertheless, Robert Bellah and his four associates proceed in almost total disregard of the swollen tradition of social criticism to which they are heir.

Their reticence is perhaps linked to the novelty of their method. They do not intend to offer us a new intellectual portrait of individualism, or a theory of why it has been so costly or how its defects might be remedied. They are committed, rather, to a presentation in which we hear, in a relatively unmediated fashion, the verbatim reports of several hundred Americans. These have been collected over several years by Ann Swidler (on love and marriage), Steven Tipton (on psychology and therapy), Richard Madsen (on town and community life), and William Sullivan (on civic values). It is an old story they are telling, but they promise fresh voices drawn from the great middle-American heartland.

What the authors hope for is presumably something like Studs Terkel passed through the prism of Alexis de Tocqueville. Readers will have to settle for less. Bellah's interlocutors offer up familiar complaints. They energetically assert their individuality, and measure their loves, careers, and lives by such standards as utility or self-expression. Even as their private lives ripple outward to encompass family, church, community, and state, a powerful sense of self remains at the center of their consciousness. Institutions that Tocqueville once thought might mediate private experience and civic life are themselves reduced to private experience. Thus, marriage becomes a contract of self-seeking individualists in search of self-expression rather than a bond knit together by mutual promises and inalienable duties. Religion is treated as another form of therapy, certainly not as a community of self-sacrifice or a repository of ultimate values. (One young woman named Sheila explains earnestly that her religion is "Sheilaism," and with that phrase turns the "me-generation" into a wild understatement.) Politics is for most an exercise in cynicism or futility.

The yearning for relationships, for transcendental belief, for civic identity (Tocqueville's three mediators of individuality) persists, but is everywhere thwarted—not merely by the privatization of our culture, but by the absence of a "language" with which to express it. Americans want more, but do not know how to name what they want. They know they are more "than a collection of private individuals who, except for a conscious contract to create a minimal government, have nothing in common." Without "a moral language that will transcend individualism," however, they cannot live what they know.

NOW all things considered, it is a good thing to have these enduring dilemmas of American liberty reiterated for us by average women and men leading the sorts of middling lives that typify America. Liberty has exacted a price in community, just as privacy has exacted a price in civility. Americans are good at joining, but lousy at doing things together. They make excellent entrepreneurs, but only average neighbors, and abysmal citizens. It is increasingly hard for individuals to make much sense of their liberty-strewn lives.

The question remains, however, whether *Habits of the Heart* contributes something new to the restatement of these old problems. The fresh, unmediated voices are a novelty, but they are remarkably unresonant, and strikingly unrepresentative. Bellah acknowledges, for example, that his sample of 200 is middle-class, "with it," and white. A great number of them seem to come from the suburbs; neither the inner city nor the rural prairie makes much of a showing here. There is not a single representative of that vast underclass of "semiliterates" that Jonathan Kozol recently numbered at 60 million. Aristocratic Brahmans and Kentucky miners fall away, because (Bellah actually cites

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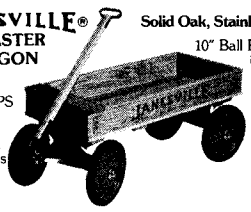

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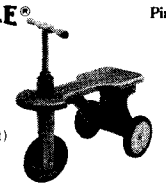

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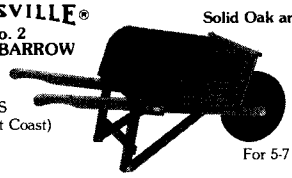

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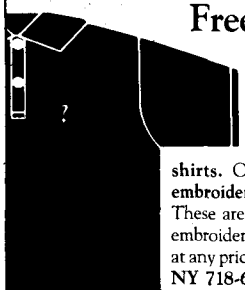

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Aristotle on this omission) the middle class is the true backbone of any stable society.

If Bellah's subjects are middle class, their voices are utterly uninflected, their speech dull, abstract, uninspired. The fault here is surely as much with the listeners as with the speakers. The interview, real or imagined, is a primary tool of all literature. Novels are interviews heard, transcribed, and organized into a narrative that tells an author's story. Bellah admits as much: "The story we tell is not just the story of those we interviewed. It is also our own." Unfortunately, he and his colleagues are terrible storytellers and thus inept mediators of plain American talk. They have no ear.

DO YOU want to hear the voice of an America that has lost its communities? Listen to Studs Terkel's Rosalie Sorrells in *American Dreams*:

> Boise hardly exists for me anymore. All the things I remember with pleasure have been torn down and been replaced by bullshit. They want to make a mall of it. . . . It used to be like a little cup of trees. . . . Just trees and this river. Oh, corridors of green. Trees so old and big that came together and made little corridors. It was against the law to shoot a squirrel, and the place was just all full of little brown squirrels. Old, old houses and a sense of community. None of that's there anymore.

Do you want to be reminded of the American dream? Bend an ear to Terkel's Matt Matejkowski:

> You can go way back to Alexander, the Greeks, and there's no country since the beginning of time like America. Sometimes you gotta shake your ass a little bit to see it, but dammit, the diamond is there.

In striking contrast, Bellah's people all seem to talk group-therapese or Yuppyese or computerese, the sort of talk that ends with "have a nice day." One man tells us, "Town government basically does a pretty good job. There are a lot of things that they do that they don't get credit for. The civic duty type of deal. It may be over-manpowered—but that's universal." Another explains "[therapy has] made me more disciplined. I can handle my feelings better when I'm feeling depressed, anxious, whatever. That's helped me handle my relationships better too. It's been good from a personal standpoint and it's good for business." Uh-huh. Everyone in *Habits of the Heart* wants to have a nice day, the way good American individualists are supposed to. Few of them are having a nice day. Bellah tells us why (they lack a language to express higher ideals, etc.), but it's ever so boring.

MAYBE it is just a question of manipulative story-telling versus accurate sociological paraphrase, maybe it is just Chicago versus California, but Terkel's America makes Bellah's America look dull and plastic. To fault a sociological treatise on questions of style may seem peculiar, but it is Bellah who picked the interview genre and asked his interlocutors to carry the message for him. Not that he doesn't offer his own analysis of the perils of individualism. It is not clear, however, that Bellah is to be preferred to Tocqueville as a diagnostician of the American malaise any more than he is to be preferred to Terkel as a mediator of the American voice.

First of all, it seems a little strange to suggest that Americans lack only a language for community. Surely it is the reality of community that has suffered. There are a number of rhetorics available in the American tradition (Puritanism, civic republicanism, progressivism, communitarian democracy) to give citizenship a name—if that is all that is lacking.

Second, Bellah's devotion to sociological categories seems to blind him to the kinds of political categories favored by Tocqueville, Madison, Jefferson, Lincoln, and many others. There is a longstanding quarrel between sociologists and psychologists over whether women and men can best be understood as abstract psyches impelled into social interaction by inner dynamics, or as social beings animated by inescapably social contexts. The authors of *Habits of the Heart* are bothered by the fact that Americans prefer psychic and individual self-conceptions to social and contextual self-conceptions. Yet they are, like psychologists, more or less oblivious to political self-understandings. This gives a profoundly conservative cast to otherwise powerful arguments in favor of community, which probably is not the authors' intent. It leads them to employ words like resurrection and rediscovery, and makes it seem as if the only hope for alienated modern women and men is to retrieve those traditional habits of the heart that held together smaller, more traditional communities. Without resort to political notions like equality, participation, and citizenship, they will be hard-pressed to gainsay the essentially conservative argument that history inevitably implies the decline of community, or the inference that a certain kind of freedom and much of what we mean by equality must be surrendered if community is to be regained.

To avoid the nostalgia and the terror of the present that characterize that general neoconservative position, Bellah and his colleagues would have to think about the differences between natural and artificial consensus, between community as a function of habits of the heart and community as a function of practices of the will. We can no more resurrect natural communities in a mobile, urban, industrial mass society than we can resurrect God in a scientific, secular society—other than as a reactionary barricade to history itself. Once the bonds of servitude have been broken and people recognize themselves as capable of governing their own lives, there is no going back to the intimacies that servitude nourished. To think otherwise is to argue that we can only regain community if we reassume our chains.

Habits of the Heart remains an important book for its themes, if not for its presentation. We cannot be too often reminded that individualism is both a blessing and a curse; that freedom can also appear as alienation, anomie, and loneliness; and that without a sense of others and our duties to them, the sense of self and the rights attaching to it are mocking promises of a self-sufficiency the human species will never possess. Bellah and his coworkers are at pains to teach these lessons. Still, some pupils will, like this reviewer, no doubt find themselves wishing that their teachers sounded a little less like public-opinion samplers and those they interview a little more like Rosalie Sorrells and Matt Matejkowski. Even at their best, however, interviewees and interviewers are not likely to be the most inspiring source of wisdom about the fate of community spirit in America.

BENJAMIN R. BARBER

Benjamin R. Barber is professor of political science at Rutgers University and the author most recently of *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (University of California Press).

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THE WILL AND THE WAY

Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank
by E. James Lieberman M.D.

(The Free Press, 485 pp., $24.95)

Otto Rank was one of Sigmund Freud's closest associates and most valued lieutenants for nearly 20 years. He wrote several books and more papers in the field of psychoanalysis, edited three revised editions of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and actually contributed two essays to that famous book that were later dropped. Yet Rank's name is known only to a few. Much of his work has never been translated from the German, and such English versions as do exist are often hard to come by.

Dr. Lieberman must be congratulated on the thoroughness with which he brings Rank to life. Rank was a reticent man, and details of his private life have evidently been hard to discover; but Lieberman seems to have disinterred all that is currently to be known about him. In doing so, he has made a valuable addition to the early history of the psychoanalytic movement, which, like Bloomsbury, seems to be inexhaustible terrain for biographers.

Otto Rank was born in Vienna in 1884. His elder brother was given a reasonable education, but at the age of 14 Otto was sent to technical school to prepare for a trade. Rank's father was an alcoholic, and the family was not well-off. At 20, Rank was earning a miserable wage in a machine shop. But he made up for his lack of formal education by extensive reading, and became enthusiastic about Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Schopenhauer, who were all to influence his later work. His diaries reveal that he was analyzing his own dreams long before he had read Freud. In 1904, when he was 20 years old, Rank went through a period of despair, and contemplated suicide. Instead of killing himself, he appears to have experienced a profound change of heart, amounting to a spiritual rebirth. It not only revolutionized his own life, but established the grounds for the kind of treatment he would later use with his patients. In the same year, his diary records his first encounter with Freud's theory of dreams. He drafted an essay called "The Artist," linking the act of creation with healing in the aphorism "Art is life's dream interpretation."

Rank first met Freud early in 1905, probably thanks to an introduction from Alfred Adler, who was Rank's family physician. Freud immediately took to him, and fulfilled for Rank the role of the loving, encouraging father who had been missing from his life. Freud gave him a job as paid secretary and minute-taker for the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, and encouraged him to seek a formal education. He finally earned a Ph.D. from the University of Vienna with a thesis on "The Lohengrin Legend."

Rank became the youngest member of Freud's inner circle of close supporters, and was so clearly Freud's favorite that he excited envy among the other analysts. As happened with Jung, Freud's initial enthusiasm for a younger disciple on whose unequivocal support he had counted turned to disillusion when the disciple began to exhibit ideas of his own that the older man could not tolerate. Rank dedicated his most famous book, *The Trauma of Birth*, published in 1923, to Freud, who accepted the tribute. But gradually Freud withdrew his support for Rank's ideas, partly because of vituperative letters from Ernest Jones and Karl Abraham, two of the analysts who were most envious of Rank's favored position in Freud's affections.

In 1924 Rank crossed the Atlantic for the first time. During his six months in the United States Rank received acclaim as a lecturer, met many of America's outstanding psychiatrists, and was strengthened in his resolve to become his own man, rather than Freud's assistant. In *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank affirmed the basic importance of the child's bond with the mother, and stated that later anxieties in a patient's life could be traced back to the primal separation from the mother at birth. For Freud, the child's relation with the father was still far more important, in the case of males at any rate. While Rank was in New York, a number of analysts who had previously been analyzed according to orthodox Freudian principles presented themselves for further analy-

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With teachers and labor and blacks,
While feminists see to the towels
And anchormen soap up their backs.
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sis. Rank wrote to his friend Ferenczi, "The analysts here were for the most part uncured and dissatisfied with Professor's analysis. . . . I have restored their confidence in themselves and in analysis, by analyzing them and showing them how one should analyze."

The final break could not be long delayed, and, in spite of further analytic sessions with Freud, the two men finally parted on April 12, 1926, 21 years after their first meeting. Freudian dissidents, like Adler and Jung, were habitually abused by their former analyst colleagues, but Rank seems to have been the subject of particularly vicious character assassination, no doubt because of the envy that he had once inspired. Ernest Jones was especially unpleasant.

Rank then established himself as an analyst in Paris, where he was consulted by such famous figures as Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller. Nin wrote at length about Rank in her diaries. She became a close friend, and followed him to the United States as his secretary. In 1935 Rank taught at the Pennsylvania School of Social Work. He also lectured at Harvard, at the invitation of Henry Murray. Recurrently afflicted with kidney trouble, Rank finally developed a high fever in October 1939. This was treated with a sulfonamide antibiotic, which had the rare and fatal side effect of depressing white cell production by the bone marrow. Rank died at age 55, just over a month after his mentor, Freud, had died in London at the age of 83.

Without access to the bulk of Rank's writings, it is hard to evaluate his ultimate importance. Still, Lieberman does convince one that he was ahead of his time, and that his influence on later psychoanalytic writers has been underestimated. Rank was particularly interested in the psychology of the artist. His enthusiasm for Wagner prompted his doctoral thesis on *Lohengrin*. He also wrote about Shakespeare and Baudelaire. He thought that neurotics were artists manqué, and that the cure for a neurosis consisted of finding a creative solution to the patient's problems rather than being concerned with tracing them to their origins. This need not take the form of composing, painting, or writing, but involved developing "a distinct personality capable of making life a creative enterprise." This is clearly what Rank had managed to do for himself during his near-suicidal episode in early life.

Rank was a pioneer, moreover, in brief therapy. He anticipated many modern analysts in stressing the importance of the actual, here-and-now relation between analyst and patient, rather than interpreting transference phenomena as invariably derived from the past. He followed Schopenhauer in seeing the individual as a manifestation of an underlying Will that shapes the person as unique, but which can be stifled by injudicious upbringing or other negative influences.

From the accounts of Rank that have been left by those who met him, it is clear that he was a charismatic character who, in spite of an unprepossessing appearance, conveyed both force and charm. Rank was extremely flexible as a therapist, adapting his technique to each new patient. "Rank once said he needed a new theory for every patient." Although Rank and Jung would probably have repudiated each other, there are many similarities between the two defectors. Both were flexible in clinical therapy; both emphasized the importance of the mother, as opposed to the father. Both were more concerned with the present than with the past; and both sought positive, creative solutions to their patients' problems, rather than simply seeking to undo the repressions of infancy.

Readers of Lieberman's book who are already versed in the early history of psychoanalysis will find some of his material familiar. But this life also contains much that is new, and certainly restores Rank to his rightful position as a major innovator among psychoanalysts.

ANTHONY STORR

Anthony Storr, a British psychoanalyst, is the author most recently of *The Art of Psychotherapy* (Methuen).

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What She Told Him by Carolyn Doty

(Viking, 312 pp., $16.95)

In each of two new novels, Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Carolyn Doty's *What She Told Him*, the author transforms a patently exhausted genre—in one case the picaresque, in the other the psychological portrait of a young man coming of age—by adding a feminist twist. The plots of both novels turn on the simple and familiar story of a young man who gradually matures as he comes to grips with a perplexing and alien world. But in each case the unknown wider world, which changes him as he comes to understand it, is the uncharted land of female experience.

The result is neither exactly a feminist novel nor a traditional one, but something entirely fresh. By funneling stories about decidedly unconventional women through a fully and sympathetically imagined male character, both novelists manage to bypass the didacticism and the urgent tone that tended to mar so much of the first wave of serious feminist fiction. But the same device opens up vast new possibilities for the narrative—in Doty's novel, vistas of psychology and sexuality; in Carter's, a faintly surreal and mostly female-populated 19th century. The territory is as fruitful as it is unfamiliar.

Angela Carter's first success in *Nights*

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at the Circus, a success she sustains throughout, is to make us believe in a female central character who hatched out of a swan's egg and has wings. Fevvers, the heroine, is a world-renowned aerialist, a star of the trapeze and the high wire who wins hearts and fortunes in London, St. Petersburg, and Siberia in the year 1899. And that's the least of it. This six-foot-two-inch winged woman, who has "blue eyes the size of dinner plates," grew up in the nurturing environment of a London whorehouse, graced an "underground museum of women monsters" for a while and then escaped from it by air, meanwhile having absorbed the science of aerodynamics, the French Symbolist poets, and the major social philosophers from the Madam's private library. At the novel's opening this unlikely heroine, already the toast of Europe, tells the foregoing story in extravagant detail to a deadpan young journalist named Jack Walser, who has come from California to expose her as a fraud. He interviews her for eight hours in her dressing room, getting steadily more confused; in the morning he dons a clown suit and runs off with the circus tour to Siberia to be near her.

A PICARESQUE is launched; but who would have thought the shopworn picaresque could still be brought to such dashing, freewheeling life? The authorial voice is incorrigible: it leaps around, mixes metaphors, dissolves Tom Jones-like into exclamations and arcane philosophical meandering:

> What a cheap, convenient, expressionist device, this sawdust ring, this little O! Round like an eye, with a still vortex in the center; but give it a little rub as if it were Aladdin's wishing lamp and, instantly, the circus ring turns into that durably metaphoric, uroboric snake with its tail in its mouth, the wheel whose end is its beginning, the wheel of fortune, the potter's wheel on which our clay is formed, the wheel of life on which we all are broken. . . . Walser thrilled, as always, to the shop-soiled yet polyvalent romance of the image.

Fevvers takes up most of the novel's foreground, but it is Walser, initially the unflappable reporter—"a kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness"—who serves as the intermediary to readers, accompanying them through various stages of befuddlement. He merely reports on the myth at first, banging out overripe copy on his portable typewriter ("Petersburg, loveliest of hallucinations . . . its boulevards of peach and vanilla stucco dissolve in mists of autumn. . . "), but soon finds the onslaught of impressions is changing his own nature as well. A tigress breaks his arm in the ring, putting an end to his newspaper dispatches; Fevvers and her sidekick, Lizzie, take over his mail pouch for their own mysterious correspondence; and Walser, deprived of his professional identity, becomes the clown he has till now only played. His transformation continues through, among other things, an amnesia-producing knock on the head, a soulful colloquy with the simian leader of Monsieur Lamarck's Educated Ape Act, and, of course, his infatuation with Fevvers, which furnishes what passes for plot as the two of them lurch from adventure to adventure.

In her wacky invincibility, Fevvers serves as an obvious figure of feminist mythology, a miracle of nature who can't make love except female-superior because her wings get in the way—but she's also a freak, a con artist, and, of course, an ordinary girl susceptible to love. But it's Walser's painful and usually comic reeducation that provides the more interesting feminist legend. From utter incomprehension, he gradually comes to understand more and more of the wild stories Fevvers and Lizzie tell him, and then, with more difficulty,

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how the reality behind those tales have made the women what they are.

This journey of consciousness is long indeed, and it takes Walser through some weird intimacies before he can achieve true companionship with the opposite sex. A typical revelation comes as Walser watches the monkey professor of the Educated Apes act, and suddenly experiences a moment of truth:

> Their eyes met. Walser never forgot this first, intimate exchange with one of these beings whose life ran parallel to his, this inhabitant of the magic circle of difference, unreachable . . . but not unknowable; this exchange with the speaking eyes of the dumb. It was like the clearing of a haze. Then the Professor, as if acknowledging their meeting across the gulf of strangeness, pressed his tough forefinger down on Walser's painted smile, bidding him be silent.

Such extravagant invention sometimes becomes a strain, not on readers' credibility—it's hardly an issue—but on their endurance. The novel seems a good deal longer than its 300 pages, and at times the odyssey becomes a rather exhausting trudge; *Nights at the Circus* is best on second or third reading, once a reader can slow down to Carter's pace without fretting over the lazy progress of the actual narrative. But the very density of the weirdness accomplishes part of Carter's purpose. Despite the ostentatiously proclaimed historical setting—"the fag-end, the smouldering cigar-butt, of a century which is just about to be ground out in the ashtray of history"—the story imparts no sense of history at all, and the reader soon realizes that this disjunction is part of the game. Carter's women exist in no accepted male tradition, but in a wholly separate, untold female version of history. In place of Freud, the Kaiser, and other male landmarks, we get a Siberian women's prison where the inmates and guards fall in love, throw down the walls, and become a lesbian collective tramping across the tundra; in place of familiar London, post-Industrial Revolution, there's a whorehouse where all the girls read Baudelaire and study socialism in their off-hours. Carter describes a locale as exotic to the traditional reader as her women are to Walser and, by implication, all men; and she undercuts accepted Western history as she goes.

The landscape, and the devices, are considerably more familiar in *What She Told Him*, at first glance a standard psychological novel in which a likable young man goes searching for his parentage and his identity. Again, though, there's a twist. Young Callant Newkirk has grown up surrounded by pictures of the heroic father who died in wartime, and listening to his mother's stories of their idyllic courtship. He's 17 when he first hears the sordid gossip: Cal's mother actually fled her hometown after becoming pregnant in a brutal rape. Before Cal can make up his mind to confront her, she dies.

THE SCENARIO has soap-opera elements, but Doty takes them beyond cliché by focusing on Cal's struggles to accept his own sexuality not primarily through his own experiences, but from the imagined horrified standpoint of the mother he adored. Muddling through a disastrous marriage, then stumbling into a sexual-assault charge of which he isn't even sure whether he's guilty, Cal is warped from within by fantasies and nightmares that seem to stem from the rapist, his father, whose taint he thinks he carries. At his low points, he imagines the rape again and again from his mother's perspective:

> Carlotta would have felt the sharp straw against her leg, against her back. Certainly she would have felt cold even though it was summer warm, because she was naked. Her wrists would be raw from the rope that held her . . . blood smeared down her thighs. She would turn over in the straw, burning her wrists more, and she would hide her face. The man was the devil, cruel and pointed, sharp and searing. The man was a man.

Struggling to keep his empathy with his mother from spilling into outright self-loathing, Cal embodies a fundamental gap between men and women's experiences of sexuality. Love for his mother makes Cal equate male lust with violence; at the same time, he is tormented by the fear that this violence, which ruined his mother's life, is something inherent in him as a man and as his father's son. What finally frees him is not mere insight or self-exploration but the courage he musters to dig back into past events and discover the truth.

Doty is at her best when exploring the shadowy areas of Cal's psyche. She goes courageously past the initial questions of rape and violence to more complicated and ambiguous sequences as Cal, searching for his father's identity, haltingly tries to make his peace with a whole range of other women and other versions of his mother's story. Parts of

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Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

The Call: An American Missionary in China by John Hersey (Knopf). The unsentimental saga of one Christian's half-century in China. (Reviewed 5/13/85)

Mountbatten: A Biography by Philip Ziegler (Knopf). The aristocrat as ambitious, accomplished statesman. (5/13/85)

Shah of Shahs by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). A tale of tyranny, set in Iran. (4/8/85)

The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan by Steven L. Spiegel (University of Chicago Press). An exhaustive, objective map of the maneuvers and muddles. (5/13/85)

Money: A Suicide Note by Martin Amis (Viking). The manic monologue of a man who has everything but is nothing. (5/6/85)

Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet by Robert Moats Miller (Oxford University Press). The life, times, and crusades of the liberal, ever active minister. (5/6/85)

Small World by David Lodge (Macmillan). Good times with globe-trotting literary professors. (4/15/85)

The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams by Donald Spoto (Little, Brown). A thorough life of the carousing playwright. (5/13/85)

Home Truths: Sixteen Stories by Mavis Gallant (Random House). Portraits of Canadians at home and abroad. (5/13/85)

Henry Purcell in Japan: Poems by Mary Jo Salter (Knopf). An impressive first collection reveals a wise voice and a widely traveling eye. (4/8/85)

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the surface plot read awkwardly by contrast, as if the psychological logic of Cal's development has backed Doty into writing about a situation she can't quite imagine. Cal's time in jail, where the threat of rape is constant, works admirably as Cal's figurative reliving of his mother's vulnerability; but the jail itself is perfunctorily drawn, and events there lack the sharp and convincing clarity of the struggles in Cal's mind.

Cal, like Walser, eventually achieves some understanding of what seemed intractably alien, but it is knowledge of previously unrecognized form, and it brings with it irreversible change. Still, the resolutions of both novels leave a surprisingly strong sense of hope. By exploring characters who are thrown paradoxically into the other sex's experience and then emerge, Doty and Carter suggest that a most perplexing and elusive gap—the abyss between men and women who share a world, but mean different things by the same words when they talk about it—is not unbridgeable.

AMY E. SCHWARTZ

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

students has declined less; when whites have improved, blacks have improved more. The difference between the races has decreased at both ages in mathematics, science, reading, writing and social studies."

The Great Society programs may or may not have had anything to do with the narrowing of the gap, but one certainly cannot argue that they caused a widening of the gap, since no such widening occurred.

I have inspected Mr. Murray's work before and had reason to approach it cautiously. Mr. Murray conducted the quantitative data analysis of the Reverend Jesse Jackson's PUSH/Excel program. There Mr. Murray used data collected midway in the project as pre-data and compared it to data collected at the end of the project, contending that this difference represented the effects of the project. Few of us would accept such work from a graduate student.

ERNEST R. HOUSE
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

To the editors:

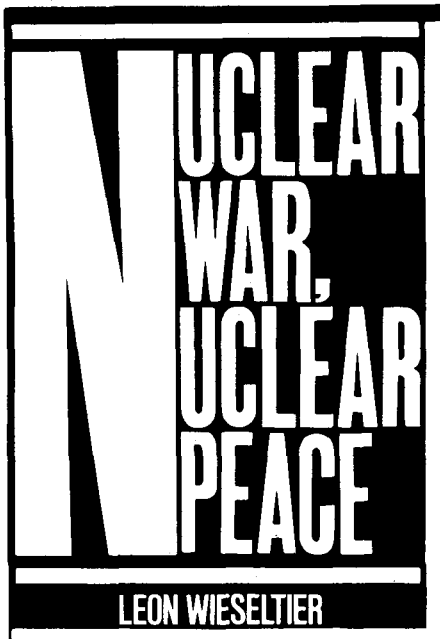
Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* deserves a less tendentious reading than it seems to have attracted from many liberals. True, Murray is no friend of the welfare state, nor is his use of "the numbers" beyond criticism. But in his book, and in our protracted conversations, he has conveyed a mature understanding of the complex "underclass" problem, and a sincere empathy for those who suffer it.

A few days' observation in a county hospital waiting room, a municipal courtroom, or a fifth-grade public school classroom in any of the dozens of stricken communities should be sufficient to convince even the most inveterate optimists that, with respect to the low-income, black central-city population, we are indeed "losing ground." No, of course, it's not simply the fault of welfare; nor would it do to enact the draconian withdrawal that Murray recommends at the end of his book. But it is also the case that the teen pregnancy, crime, unemployment, education, and health problems of this population would, at best, be only marginally ameliorated by fiddling with the social welfare budget.

Moreover, it is entirely plausible that, as Murray charges, aspects of the conventional wisdom on public policy have contributed to this decline. What is so frustrating about the response to Murray's thesis offered by Robert Greenstein, Michael Harrington, and others is that they refuse to take seriously this charge. They have chosen instead to meet a serious critique of their worldview concerning the proper relationship between the state and the indigent with an effort to establish the empirical proposition that giving people money does more good than harm. They offer no discussion of the complex, delicately balanced system of values and norms that regulates the behavior of individuals in poor (and all other) communities.

As someone who grew to maturity in the black ghetto of Chicago, I feel a keen sense of urgency about the need to face squarely in our public discourses the tragedy that is unfolding in that, and so many other, communities. I am frankly less concerned to identify who in the debate "really cares" than I am to determine who has some ideas that may ultimately promote solutions to this dilemma. In the social policy arena Greenstein and Harrington are the conservatives, defending reflexively the intellectual status quo, while Murray is a radical, challenging received wisdom.

GLENN C. LOURY
Cambridge, Massachusetts



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Front-page, *The New York Times Book Review*

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Born Again

WHEN WAS IT that "born-again Christian" became a pejorative expression, or even an epithet? Jimmy Carter may have given attention to detail a bad name, but I don't think it's fair to accuse him of transforming "born-again Christian" into a term of abuse. Maybe Jerry Falwell deserves the blame for this. Regardless, it is a designation many politicians and others scrupulously avoid. Remember the first presidential debate last fall? When asked if they thought of themselves as born-again Christians, Reagan and Mondale ran from the expression as if it were synonymous with pederast. In Reagan's case especially, this was no profile in courage, since he devoted much of 1984 to cultivating the Christian right. But I understand his reluctance to accept the "born-again" tag, which badly needs to be explained. Let me try. I have a special interest in this because, having asked the offending question at the debate, I have been identified several times since then as a "born-again Christian" myself. I accept the label. When asked about it, should I have said, "No, I'm an Episcopalian"? That wouldn't be a lie because I am an Episcopalian. But "born-again" should be a perfectly respectable term. It does not mean that one follows Falwell or any other fundamentalist preacher on TV. It does not mean one handles snakes at church. The expression comes from the New Testament story of Jesus's meeting with Nicodemus, a Pharisee. Jesus said one must be "born again" to enter the Kingdom of God. He did not mention Falwell or the school-prayer amendment. What the phrase means, then, is that one must be reborn spiritually. In practical terms, a "born-again" person is one who has made an adult decision to be a Christian. Millions of people have done this, many of whom have little time for Jerry Falwell.

HYPOCRISY IS the daily bread of Washington, but even by Washington standards a Great Moment in Hypocrisy occurred the last week in April. The scene was the Roosevelt Room in the West Wing of the White House, a few steps from the Oval Office. The event was the swearing-in of Faith Ryan Whittlesey, former director of the White House office of public liaison, as American ambassador to Switzerland. A crowd of potentates was on hand: President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Defense Secretary Weinberger, and so on. Treasury Secretary James Baker III was there too. Baker and Whittlesey, to put it mildly, loathe each other. As White House chief of staff, Baker was the pragmatist-in-residence. Whittlesey is a conservative ideologue with ties to the New Right. Rather than whisper sweet nothings into the ears of interest groups, which is what the public liaison job had always consisted of, Whittlesey turned the office into a combat command post in the Reagan Revolution. She lobbied for a tough line in Central America, dismissed the gender gap as liberal twaddle, worked against abortion, embraced the Christian right, etc. And she didn't clear everything with Baker. Soon, hostile stories began appearing in the press to the effect that Whittlesey was ineffective and an embarrassment to the White House. As required by journalistic convention, the source of these stories was obscured ("White House officials"), but Whittlesey partisans blamed Baker and his staff. Nevertheless, Baker came to Whittlesey's swearing-in. They smiled at each other and shook hands. He said how happy he was for her. She said he should drop by the embassy in Bern sometime. Come to think of it, this may not have been a high point in hypocrisy. Baker may have been truly happy about Whittlesey's new posting. After all, he'd been trying to get her out of the White House for years, and now she's not only out of town but off the continent as well.

SURE, WHITE HOUSE communications director Patrick J. Buchanan is a right-wing press basher who won't talk to reporters. But now the press corps has a serious reason for resenting him as well: envy. As a senior White House staff member, Buchanan had to release a financial statement. It turns out he made more than $400,000 last year, which is a lot for a journalist and many times more than the scribblers covering the White House make. (TV correspondents like Sam Donaldson are a different story.) What's especially irritating to many is Buchanan's emergence as a media star (columnist, regular on a TV chat show) without climbing the journalistic ladder from the police beat to city hall to statehouse to Washington bureau. And now, on top of wealth and fame, Buchanan has power. It's not easy to forgive.

ON THE LAST FRIDAY in April, just three days after Whittlesey's swearing-in, I found myself back in the Roosevelt Room, this time among six journalists invited to a special high-powered briefing on the forthcoming Senate budget fight. Although I've been covering the White House for years, I'm not used to this cushy treatment, complete with sweet rolls and coffee. Why the sudden elevation from the sweaty throng in the press room? I wish I could report that joining *The New Republic* is what made the difference. Chatting with my fellow invitees, though, I realized that the connecting thread was that all but one of us were scheduled to perform on the weekend TV panel shows. Further inquiry revealed that this one had come in the place of a colleague who was going to be on "Washington Week in Review." Apparently the White House had simply called around to the producers and asked who the press panelists would be. Making a mental moral reservation about this bias against the print media, I nevertheless sat down with my sweet roll to hear what David Stockman and Donald Regan had to say. Stockman went first, talking up the budget cuts as if the dawn's breaking the next day depended on them. Right next to Stockman at the end of a long, polished table sat William Greider of *Rolling Stone*, who was to appear on "McLaughlin Group." Stockman must be about as fond of Greider as Faith Whittlesey is of Jim Baker, since Greider wrote the famous 1981 magazine article quoting Stockman's doubts about Reaganomics that almost cost him his job. Nevertheless, he answered Greider's questions dutifully and cordially. After 20 or 25 minutes, Regan walked in and took questions for another 15 to 20 minutes, going "off-the-record" only once. One reporter appropriated Regan's off-the-record comment as his own and used it on a show, prompting the moderator to congratulate him for making a trenchant point.

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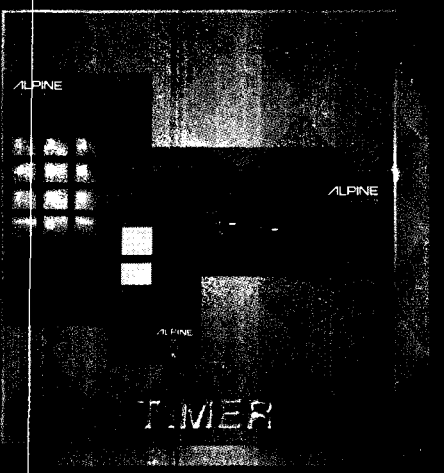

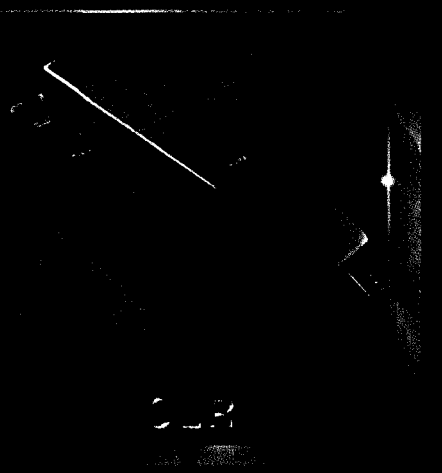

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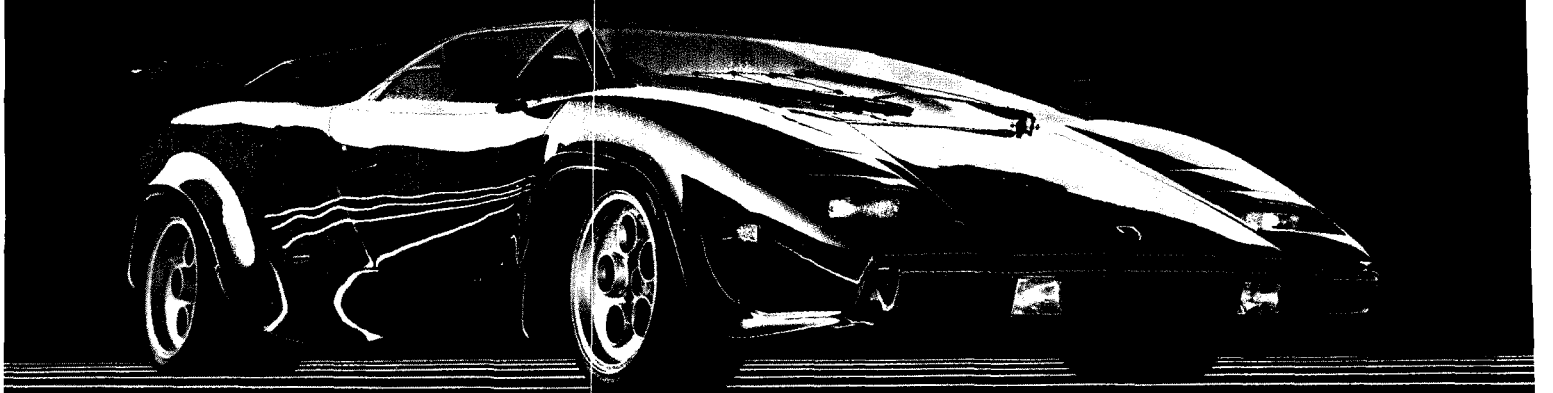

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